Raas-Rasa

By

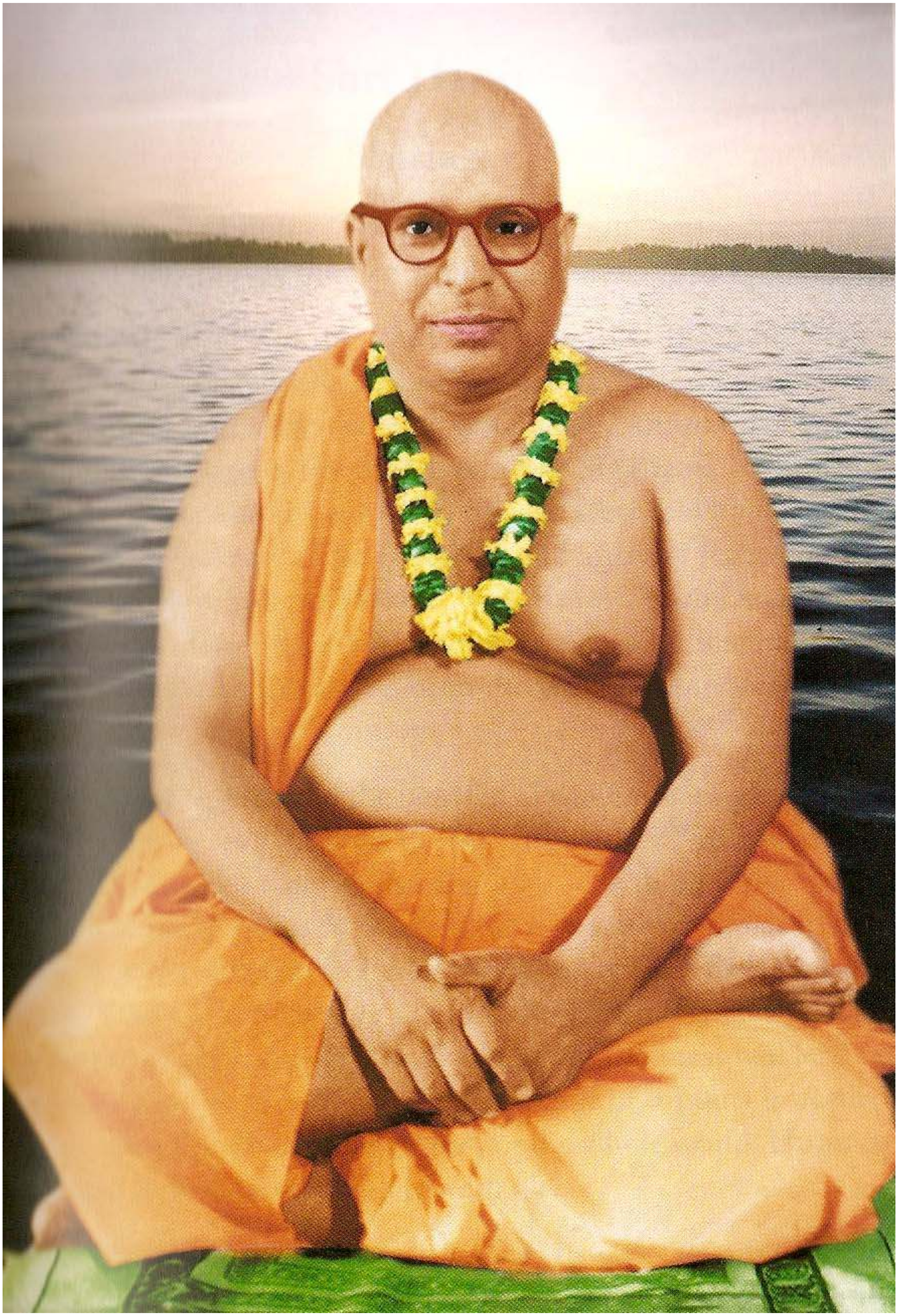
Swami Akhandanand Saraswati

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Satsahitya Prakashan Trust
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Blessings

Our Gurudev, Swami Akhandanand Saraswatiji, was considered to be one of the highest authorities on the Shrimad Bhagwat Mahapuran. The Bhagwat is considered to be the most important Purana because of its emphasis on bhakti for the Lord Shri Krishna.

The famous Raas-leela of Shri Krishna is given in five chapters in the tenth canto of the Bhagwat. This description of a mystic experience has been much misunderstood. Some people consider it an interpolation, and some say that it is profane.

Maharajji has explained that the purpose of Bhagwan's Raas Leela is to make people give thought to Him, give them discrimination, and the intellect that leads them to enlightenment, so that they can ultimately savor the sweet essence of a pristine existence of pure bliss.

Maharajji's concise summery of the subtle significance of Shri Krishna's frolic with the gopis of Vrindavan is presented in the form of 'Raas Rasa'. The talks were transcribed by Smt. Satishbala Mahendralal Jethi, and are now translated into English by Smt.Purnima L.Toolsidass. Shri Pankaj Roy has painstakingly edited the English version and included the Nagari script. I believe it will bring clarification and benefit to all who read and savor the enriching emotions awoken by the divine episode of the Raas leela.

My blessings to all who have contributed in the publication of this book.

Vrindavan **Swami Sacchidananda Saraswati**
May 2008

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Raasa-Rasa

CHAPTER - I

(The sweetness of Shri Krishna's Raas Leela).

Bhagwan protects Dharma (eternal righteousness) predominantly through His सत् अंश *sat ansha* (the Sat part of His essence that is Sacchidananda. Sat=existence, Chit=consciousness, Anand=bliss). He protects the tradition of Gnan through His Chit ansha, and He protects His Anand ansha through लीला *leelaa* (sport or frolics) like the रास लीला *raasa-leelaa* (the frolic of dancing with the gopis of Vrindavan).

Bhagwan is Sacchinanda; He has Sat, He has Chit, and He has Anand. He is the अद्वितीय तत्त्व *adviteeya tattva* (the non-dual essence), and so He is beyond the divisions of कर्ता-कर्म *kartaa-karma* (the doer and the action) in Dharma, the ज्ञाता-ज्ञेय *gyaataa-gye`ya* (the knower and the known) in Chit, or in the उपदेश *upade`sha* – the sermon or advice. Nor does His Anand have the divisions of भोक्ता-भोग्य *bhoktaa-bhogya* (the one who experiences and that which is experienced). Sat, Chit, Anand, and Advitiya are the Bhagwan's essence.

Even in the Lord's Avatars, Dharma was predominant in the Avatar as Shri Rama. Gnan was predominant when He descended as Kapil and Dattatreya; and Anand dominated the Krishnavatar. The आनन्द-रस *ananda-rasa* (the sweet emotion of bliss) manifested mostly at Vrindavan, during His leela at Vraja (the area around Vrindavan).

Among the leelas He did there, there are different leelas that manifest the anand rasa. There is the सख्यरस *sakhya rasa* (the sweetness of friendship), in which the गोप *gopa* (cowherds) and ग्वाल-बाल *gwaala-baala* (cowherd boys) have प्रेम *pre`ma* (pure love) for Shri Krishna. Prema comes from prema. The विभाव *vibhaava* (supporting factors) are the friends of Shri Krishna and Shri Krishna Himself. The उद्दीपन-विभाव *udeepana vibhaava* (the arousing factor) is their prema.

There is the वात्सल्य रस *vaatsalya rasa* (the sweetness of motherly love). Vatsalya is free of desire; there is only love in it. Yashoda Maiya's love for Krishna, and Krishna's love for Maiya.

Then there is the कान्तारस *kaanta-rasa* or मधुररस *madhur rasa* (the sweetness of romantic love) of the gopis (the cowherd maids). This is the method of savoring the rasa, because in सत्ता *sattaa* (pure existence) the end result is

Samadhi (deep meditation). There is no विक्षेप *vikshe`pa* (disturbance) In Gnan, there is no consideration for the presence or absence of vikshep. Gnan remains unaffected whether the mind is restless or at peace. In Anand, there is no Samadhi, and no consideration of vikshep. There is only a carefree joy – a मस्ती *masti!* Musical instruments are played, people sing and dance, and do dramas. The Atma's anand that abides in the heart is manifested.

The thing is that the musical instruments play outside the body, dancing is done by movements of the body, अभिनय *abhinay* (expressing emotions) is done through facial expressions and body postures, and singing is done with the support of the voice, to manifest rasa. This raas-leela of Bhagwan is a form of this rasa.

The Upanishads said, रसो वै सः। रसं ह्येवायं लब्ध्वा आनन्दी भवति। '*Raso vai sah. Rasam hye`vaayam labdhvaa aanandi bhavati.'* Rasa is Bhagwan's essence, and our mind has a greater propensity for rasa. Sat is sufficient for right behavior and Samadhi. Chit is sufficient for getting Gnan and becoming free of duality. However, our mind will not linger anywhere, without Anand. Bhagwan arranged for the leela of आनन्द-रस *aananda-rasa* (the sweet emotion of bliss) to draw the minds of people towards Him. In his commentary of the Shrimad Bhagwat, Shri Shridhar Swami has said that Bhagwan did this leela to attract people who are filled with lustful desires, and also to attract the liberated Mahapurush (enlightened Saints) who are freed from all dualities and worldly obligations.

In Sanskrit, the word लीला '*leelaa'* means, to give a heartfelt embrace. A leela that is akin to the Lord's embracing us and holding us close to His heart. It is for those who want only Bhagwan. A desire for wealth is different, a desire for learning is different, and so is a desire for Samadhi. The people who want to cling to Bhagwan and become one with Him, want भगवत्प्रेम *bhagwatpre`ma* (pure love for Bhagwan).

It is altogether a different thing to want wealth and worldly indulgences, and it is something quite different to want Dharma and Moksha (liberation from the cycle of rebirth). Bhagwan manifested this raas-leela for those who wanted only the flavor of the rasa of Bhagwan, and to merge into Him.

रसः एव रासः। रसानां समूहो रासः।

'Rasa e`va raasah. Rasaanaam samooho raasah.'

Raas means a kind of dance. Bharat Muni has described it. In the different kinds of dance, this is called the हल्लीसक नृत्य *halleesak nritya*. In the science of the performing arts, the form of this dance is that there is only one male dancer, and many female dancers. The male dancer is surrounded by the women dancers. He moves so rapidly that every one of the hundred lady

dancers feels that he is before her. This kind of dancing is called the 'Hallasik Nritya', in the field of performing arts.
Take it like this; Shri Krishna is your heart, and the movement all around (your thoughts) is the lady dancers who dance continuously. Shri Krishna is in the center, and the gopis are the continuously shifting of the mind. अङ्गनामङ्गनामन्तरे माधवो '*Anganaamananaamantare` maadhavo'*. Shri Krishna stands in the middle, playing His flute. He goes round so swiftly that every gopi sees Him before her, looking at her. 'He is looking only at me; He is dancing with me alone.'
Another kind of dance is that one Krishna stands between two gopis. It is not that there is one Krishna and one gopi. There are two gopis and one Krishna in-between. Then again, two gopis and one Krishna, and so on. Shri Krishna rests one hand on the shoulder of the gopi on either side. The gopis forget themselves as they dance. Then, the situation changes, and every gopi finds herself dancing alone with Shri Krishna. There is one Krishna with every gopi.
Thus, there are three types of raas leelas – one Krishna with many gopis, one Krishna with two gopis, and one Krishna with one gopi.
Take your mind to where the Yamuna is flowing gently, where Shri Giriraj (the hill called Govardhan) stands with his head held high, where there are rows of green trees. The flowering creepers smile with bright, fragrant flowers, and even the birds and animals are so quiet that they seem to be meditating. All are having the दर्शन *darshan* (vision) of this leela. Shri Krishna stands among the gopis, wearing His मोर-मुकुट *mora-mukut* (crown with peacock feathers). He has a तिलक *tilak* (auspicious mark) of saffron on His forehead. Ear rings dangle from His ears. He twists His eyebrows quizzically, and gives enchanting sidelong glances. A slight smile hovers on His lips. His dangling ear rings seem to dance on His cheeks, as His पीताम्बर *peetaambara* (golden yellow stole) flutters gently in the breeze.
The ornaments on Shri Krishna's ankles, wrists and waist tinkle musically as He frolics and dances with the gopis. Watch this scene with love. If you see that someone is thirsty, offer her some water to drink. If any of the bells fall off the anklets, gather them up for the gopi. Fan someone who needs a cooling breeze. Play the drums, cymbals, or any other musical instrument. Lose your consciousness and dance with them.
This is not a leela of entertainment. It signifies our state of निदिध्यासन *nididhyaasana* (one of the steps in Yoga, where the mind is brought back repeatedly to the object of meditation). One वृत्ति *vritti* (mental impulse) and one Chaitanya (Consciousness), one vritti and one Consciousness. The

Chaitanya is the link of all mental impulses. It is the साक्षी *saakshee* (witness), and the thoughts are modified consciousness; hence, they are not separate from consciousness. This is a Gnan that had great depth. It is a Gnan that is filled with happiness. It is a Gnan that dances joyfully. Raas leela is that, which makes Gnan a dancing blissful exhilaration. It is not a leela of a lustful man and women. It is a wonderful, divine leela that is consciousness itself. It is filled with rasa (deep, enriching emotion), sweetness, song and dance. Bhagwan manifests this leela to draw the minds of people towards Him. The Mahatmas describe it for the same reason. Shridhar Swami has described it as a victory over lust.

तस्माद्रासक्रीडाविडम्बनं कामविजयख्यापनायेत्येव तत्त्वम्। किंच श्रृङ्गरकथापदेशेन विशेषतो निवृत्तिपरेयं पञ्चाध्यायीति व्यक्तोकरिष्यामः।।

Tasmaadraasakreedaavidambanam kaamavijayakhyaapanaaye`tye`va tattvam. Kincha shringaarakathaapade`she`na vishe`shato nivrittipare`yam panchaadhyaayeeti vyaktokarishyaamah.

The fact is that the purpose of the रास-पञ्चाध्यायी *raasa panchaadhyayee* (the five chapters that describe the raas leela) is to induce a person's thoughts to lose interest in the world, and get focused on Bhagwan. Great men like Shri Vallabhacharya and Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu have said, प्रपंच-विस्मारणद्वारा स्वासकत्युत्पादनार्थम् '*Prapanchavismaaranadvaaraa svaasaktyutpaadanaartham.'* Generally, the outlooks of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Vallabhacharya differ in many ways. It is Bhagwan who makes two people give different opinions, and causes confusion! He is full of mischief! In this regard, however, both Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Vallabhacharya hold the same opinion. Both say that the reason Shri Krishna does the raas leela is to turn our thoughts away from this interactive world. He wants our thoughts to be focused on four points – the sweetness of His form, the sweetness of His leela, the sweetness of His flute, and the sweetness of His beloved. Shri Krishna wants the जीव *jeeva* (Atma attached to a body) out of this world. He wants us to forget the external world and immerse ourselves in Him. Shridhar Swami laid the foundation.

ब्रह्मादि जयसंरूढदर्पकन्दर्पदर्पहा।
जयति श्रीपतिर्गोपीरासमण्डलमण्डनः।।

Brahmaadi jayasanroodhadarpakandarpahaa,
Jayati shreepatirgopeeraasamandalamandanah.

काम *Kaama* (the presiding deity of lust) overcame Brahmaji. Shankarji was left. Kama made him naked before Mohini. Desire is always predominant in Indra. Kama's vanity was increased by his having conquered them all. 'I have won over Brahmaji, Shankarji, and many great Rishis (Sages).' He

thought. Shri Krishna sis the raas leela to shatter Kama's vanity. Kama said, ' Maharaj, I have overpowered all others. Let us have a battle.' Shri Krishna said mentally, 'Son, you've begun to challenge your father now!'

Pradyuman personifies Kama, and Shri Krishna is his father. 'Very well, where should we fight? Should we fight in the open field, or should I battle him from within a fort?'

'Fight in an open field, where there are many beautiful women who are in love with you.' It is difficult to conquer lust in such a situation, because Kama's entire Army is there.

Therefore, it is the शरद्ऋतु *sharad ritu* (Autumn), the jasmine creepers are in full bloom, and a full moon shines in the sky. This is where Shri Krishna challenged Kama to a battle. He played His flute. The sound was such that Saraswati (the goddess of learning and arts) was entranced and stupefied. She turned into a bamboo plant, and became Shri Krishna's flute.

When the blissful ripples of sound emerged from the flute that was Saraswati in a bamboo form – जातहर्ष उपरम्भति विश्वं *jaataharsha uparambhati vishvam* – Shri Krishna was filled with bliss. He embraced the whole world through the sweet notes of His flute. The sound filled the sky. Shri Krishna's spirit filled the air. The sun and the moon stood still in amazement. The flames in the fires that were burning became cool. The Yamuna stopped flowing. The earth tingled with ecstasy. When the entire Creation was entranced by the love-filled notes of Shri Krishna's flute, the gopis got a taste of its rasa.

There is no काम *kaama* (lust) here; there is only शुद्ध प्रेम *shuddha pre`ma* (pure love). In the Sanskrit language, no word gives its common connotation. People grasp the meaning of the word according to their eligibility. It is a दैवी *daivee* (divine) matter. This माया *maayaa* (the Lord's power of illusion) is itself, चिन्मयी *chinmayee* (filled with consciousness). It is चेतन *che`tan* (conscious).

You see, गोप *gopa* is a word. It means a man who tends to the cows. Very well; the gopas are cowherds. Shri Krishna Himself becomes a cowherd, and plays with them. The ग्वाल *gwaala* are also gopas, and so is Shri Krishna. This is the obvious meaning.

Now, take the word 'gopa' further. *Go* means speech, and प *pa* means the one who protects. The learned Brahmins who study what is given in the Vedas are gopas. And, the one who is always playing with them, in the form of the meanings of the words of the Vedas – we are always playing with words – is the second meaning.

The third meaning is that *go* refers to the inclination of the mental movements – our thoughts, moods, and innate urges. गच्छन्ति विषयेषु इति गावा प्रत्यया *'Gachhanti vishaye`shu iti gaavaa pratyayaa.'* A gopa is one who guards the inclinations of the sense organs, stops our eyes, ears, nose, touch, etc from indulging in their objects. Gopa refers to a man who is able to control his sense organs and mental impulses. This gopa leela manifests before people who have self restraint. A gopa is a person who hides the profound meanings and experiences about Shri Krishna – गुपु रक्षणे *gopu rakshane`.*

Very well; let us go even deeper. गोभिः इन्द्रियैः इन्द्रियवृत्तिः पिबन्ति श्रीकृष्ण-रसं '*Gobhih indriyaih indriyavrittih pibanti shreekrishna-rasam*.' One who savors the rasa of Shri Krishna through his sense organs and mental inclinations is a gopa. A gopa imbibes प्रेम रस *pre`ma rasa* (the rasa of pure love). This is why people who say, 'I have translated the mantras of the Vedas. I have converted Sanskrit to Hindi,' can never actually translate the Vedic verses fully and accurately. The reason is that words reveal newer and deeper meanings as the person evolves.

So, then, what is the meaning of गोपी *gopee* (cowherd maiden)? A gopi is a lady who listens to Shri Krishna with her ears, touches Him, sees Him with her eyes, savors His sweetness with her tongue, and inhales His fragrance through her nose. She experiences Shri Krishna with all five senses. Such a lady is called a gopi.

The seductive gestures, looks, and indications of desire that are displayed in the dramas about Shri Krishna have become folk dancing. The simple rustic people show it as the love-play of humans. It is an extremely uncouth representation of Shri Krishna leela. The leela of Shri Krishna has an extremely profound mystic significance. It is the pulsating of the Sacchidananda (the Brahman, whose essence is Sat=existence, Chit=consciousness, and Anand=bliss) who is the non-dual Paramatma. स्पन्द ईषत् चलने *'Spanda eeshat chalane`.'* Rasa drips from this स्पन्दन *spandan* (pulsation). This rasa is given the name of रास लीला '*raasa leelaa*' (the frolic of dancing). The gopi drinks the rasa of Paramananda (supreme bliss). Has He not become the भोग्य *bhogya* (that which is experienced)? He drinks the gopi rasa. Who, then, is the भोक्ता *bhoktaa* (the one who experiences) and who is the bhogya?

I will not tell you a few things about the raas leela. The gopi sees Shri Krishna going and coming, every morning and evening.

तं गोरजश्छुरितकुन्तलबद्धवन्य - प्रसूनरुचिरेक्षणचारुहासम्।
वेणुं क्वंणन्तमनुगैरनुगीतकीर्तिं गोप्यो दिदृक्षितदृशोभ्यगमन्समेताः।।

नीत्वा मुकुन्दमुखसारघमक्षिभृङ्गैऽस्तापं ब्रजहुर्विरजं व्रजयोषितोऽह्नि।
तत्सत्कृतिं समधिगम्य विवेश गोष्ठं सव्रीडहासविनयं यदपाङ्गमोक्षम्।। -१०-१६, ४२-४३

Tam gorajashchhuritakunalabaddhavanya-
prasoonaruchire`kshanachaaruhaasam. Ve`num
kvanantamanugairaranugeetakeertim gopayo
didrikshitadrishobhyagamansame`tah. Peetvaa
mukundamukhasaaradhamakshibhringaistaapam vrajahurvirajam
vrajayoshitohni. Tatsatkritimsamadhigamya vive`sha goshtham
savreedahaasavinayam yadapaangamoksham.
(Shrimad Bhagwat 10.16. 42-43).

Shri Krishna is coming back with the cows He took for grazing early morning. The cows walk in front, then comes Shri Krishna, and then the gwaal baal. Just take a look at the scene. तं गोरजश्छुरितकुन्तल *'Tam gorajashchhuritakuntala'* – the dust raised by the hooves of the cows falls on Shri Krishna's hair and body. The dust is a sign of how hard He has worked, herding the cows since early morning. A fine layer of white dust covers His black hair and dark, blue-hued body. Just take one look at this scene. I am not narrating some incident or story. Picture this scene with your mind's eye. Take your mind there, to Vrindavan.

लटकि लटकि मन-मोहन आवनि
झूमि-झूमि पग धरत भूमि पर,
गति मातंग लजावनि।।

Lataki lataki mana-mohana aavani.
Jhoomi-jhoomi paga dharata bhoomi para,
Gati maatanga lajaavani.'

Shri Krishna leans towards this सखा *sakhaa* (companion, friend), then towards that sakha. He bends to the left and to the right, as He dances. He glances up at the gopis watching from peepholes, and at the ones who stand by the roadside. He comes forward, herding the cows in front of Him. The cows keep turning their heads to look at Him. The road is long.

नवघन पर मानो झीनि बदरिया शोभा रस बरसावनि।

Navaghana para maano jheeni badariyaa shobhaa rasa barasaavani.

It is as though a newly formed rain cloud covers the sky, and thin, white, puffs of cloud wander among it. Every part of Shri Krishna's body is extremely lovely. This is a leela for *dhyaana* (meditating upon). A peacock sheds his feather, as it dances to Shri Krishna's flute. Shri Krishna picks it up, and tucks it into His hair. His curly hair is jet black, profuse, and very fine. Placing a peacock feather in it is a wonderful leela of His.

तं गोरजश्छुरितकुन्लबद्धवन्यप्रसून

Tam gorajashchhuritakuntalabaddhavanyaprasoona.

All the flowering plants in the forest are in bloom. Shri Krishna's face is very attractive. His smile is filled with sweetness. He plays His flute. शान्तारस *Shaantaarasa* (the bliss of peace), ब्रह्मानन्द *brahmaananda* (the bliss of Brahmaji) and मोक्षानन्द *mokshaananda* (the bliss of liberation) all fade into paleness beside the bliss of the sound of Shri Krishna's flute. This बाँसूरी *baansuree* (bansa= bamboo; bansuri means a flute made of bamboo) is pouring forth a stream of आनन्द रस *ananda rasa* (the enriching emotion of bliss). The gopis look on, as the gwaal baal sing Shri Krishna's praises. Shri Krishna attracts everyone by showing a little shyness, a little love, and a little smile. His रुचिर चितवन *ruchira chitavana* (appealing appearance) attracts all. In Sanskrit, the word 'ruchir' means that He draws all the people, with their different inclinations, towards Him. रुचिर राति - आदत्ते। रचि दानादानयोः *Ruchira raati-aadatte`. Rayi daanaadaanayoh.'*

The gopis looked at Shri Krishna with eyes filled with thirst – दिदृक्षितदृशोभ्यगमन्समेताः *didrikshitadrishobhya gamansame`taah* – the desire to see did not stay in their heart. Where did it stay? It came into the eyes, meaning, it became so strong that it left its normal place, and came into the eyes – दिद्दक्षितद्दशा *didrikshitadridashaa.'* The gopis were coming towards Shri Krishna in a group. The sweetness of Shri Krishna's form is such that when the gopis hear the sound of His flute, their heart comes into their ears. When His anklets tinkle with the sound of रुन-झुन *run-jhun*, or the flute is played, the mind no longer remains in its own place. It comes into the ears.

When the fragrance of Shri Krishna's body reached the gopi, her mind doesn't stay in her heart. It comes into her nose. When a gopi gets the experience of His touch, her mind comes into her skin. When she gets a glimpse of His beauty, her mind comes into her eyes.

Whenever any sense organ of a gopi experiences Shri Krishna, her entire mind refuses to remain in her heart. It leaves its sphere and goes into that इन्द्रिय *indreeya* (sense organ). The gopis savor the rasa of Bhagwan through that indriya. It may be due to the compassion of the Mahatmas, or it may be the love that is the essence of Bhagwan, that rasa was converted into something tangible. The rasa that is beyond everything came, and began to dance before our very eyes. It became a sound that we could hear, music that entered through the ears. It began to touch our skin, and come into our nose as a fragrance. It became a tangible sweetness that entered our taste buds. Every fiber of the body is thrilled by Him.

The gopis made a firm resolve that Shri Krishna is the only one worth loving. They saw that the entire Creation was saturated with Shri Krishna's

love. The Devis (wives of the Devtas) of Swarga (the Heaven where Indra is King) are so entranced by seeing Shri Krishna that they forget their own body.

Water lilies bloom out of season. Trees begin to ooze honey. Animals stop chewing. They neither swallow, nor spit out the half chewed grass that is in their mouth. The calves can neither swallow, nor spit out the milk that is in their mouth. Their body thrills with bliss. Shri Krishna is in their heart, and their heart is filled with love.

The river stops flowing, and birds stop chirping. Animals stand motionless. All of Creation is enthralled with love for Shri Krishna. The gopis saw all this. 'How wonderful! They all have a deep love for Shri Krishna. We are lacking in love for Him. We do व्रत *vrata* (a fixed period of austerity for a specific purpose). It is called the Katyayini puja – worship of Devi Katyayini.' All shame left the gopis. They leave their homes, arm in arm, saying, 'Krishna-Krishna! Krishna-Krishna!' meaning, 'My attractive Beloved!'

Krishna means a magnet, a black magnet that attracts iron. The gopis say, 'Our hearts may be made of iron. It may be the hardest of all matter, but Shri Krishna is a magnet. He is कृष्ण-कर्षति-आकर्षति *Krishna-karshita-aakarshita* (that, which attracts). He is the magnet that attracts our heart. He will pull us towards Him. Come, Krishna!' They cut away the आवरण *aavarana* (veil of worldly considerations) that separates Shri Krishna from them.

This is the difference between bhakta (loving devotion) and Gnan. What is the difference? In Gnan, the jeeva has to make the effort to do श्रवण *shravana* (listening to spiritual discourses), मनन *manana* (giving profound thought to what he has heard), and निदिध्यासन *nididhyaasana* bringing the mind back repeatedly to the object of meditation) etc. The jeeva has to do the आवरण-भंग *aavarana-bhanga* (shatter the veil of Maya, that separates them from the Brahman). The jeeva has to remove the veil by his own efforts, and merge into the Brahman.

In bhakta, however, Bhagwan Himself tears away the veil that has fallen over the intellect of the bhakta. That is called चीर-हरण *cheera-harana* (when Shri Krishna steals the gopis' garments). It is the leela of avaran-bhang. If a small child come to his mother to drink milk, and she is shy in uncovering her breast for him, neither will he get milk, nor will she get the joy of feeding her baby. If a curtain separates a husband and wife, they will not experience मधुर रस *madhur rasa* or कान्त रस *kaanta rasa* (romantic ecstasy) of conjugal bliss.

In the same way, as long as there is a curtain that separates the जीवात्मा *jeevaatmaa* (Atma attached to a body) from the Paramatma, the person will not obtain the joy of meeting the Paramatma. Unless and until the Guru and disciple are completely open with each other, the शक्तिपात *shaktipaata* (a Yogic method of bestowing spiritual power to a disciple) cannot be done. Unless श्रद्धा *shraddhaa* (faith) is wedded to अनुग्रह *anugraha* (Grace), rasa can never arise.

Similarly, there is a veil that separates the bhakta from Bhagwan, the lover from the Beloved, that bhakta tears away. There is a standing arrangement between bhakta and prema, that in this, the Beloved – Bhagwan – Himself shatters this veil of nescience. This is Bhagwan's task. This is the cheer-haran leela.

The मनोरथ *manoratha* (wish) of the gopis was fulfilled. Once this is done, no further duties or obligations remain for a bhakta. Shri Krishna made the Brahmins favorable. He captivated the hearts of their wives. He made the Devtas favorably inclined. He crushed Indra's ego. 'Devtas!' He said, 'You stay in Swarga. My Devta is on this earth. It is the earth of Vrindavan, the rock of Vrindavan. My Devta lives in the world of mortals, not in Heaven.'

The Devtas were stupefied by Shri Krishna, so were the Brahmins. Varun, the Devta of water was deluded by Shri Krishna. After doing all this, Shri Krishna played the flute.

रुन्धन्नम्बुमृतः चमत्कृतिपरं कुर्वन्मुहुस्तुम्बरु
ध्यानादन्तरयन् सनन्दनमुखान् विस्मापयन् वेधसम्।
औत्सुक्यावलिभिर्बलिं चटुलयन् भोगीन्द्रमाघूर्णन्।
भिन्दन् नन्दकटाहभित्तिमभितो ब्रभ्राम वंशीध्वनिः।।

Rudhannambumritah chanatkritiparam kurvanmuhstumbarum
dhyaanaadantarayan sanandanamukhaan vismaapayan ve`dhasam,
Autsukhyaavalibhirbalim chatulayan bhogeendramaadhoornan,
Bhindan nandakataahabhittimabhito babhraama vansheedhvanih.

His flute plays. It played in such a way that the clouds stood still in the sky. The celestial beings that lived on mountain tops began to feel stifled. The Samadhi of the Sanakadis was broken. Brahmaji was amazed. Bali, who lives in Patal (a land below the earth), became restless. 'Where is this sound coming from?'

Sheshnag (the thousand headed serpent on whom the Lord Narayana reclines) became intoxicated. The dividing wall of the universe was shattered. Millions of universes were filled with the sound of Shri Krishna's flute. The sound was all pervading and irresistible. This leela of His was

filled with rasa. It was filled with a divine sweetness, consciousness, and joy. It attracted all Creation towards Him.
The flute played, and the gopis left the whole interactive world – including their worldly duties. They gave up their tender, loving attachments. They forgot their own body. They gave up all considerations of Artha (material wealth), Dharma, Kama (worldly desires) and Moksha (liberation from rebirth. These are the four principal achievements in a human life). They ran towards Shri Krishna, and Shri Krishna stopped them there.
Shri Krishna and the gopis had a शास्त्रार्थ *shaastraartha* (debate on what is said in the Shastras). Shri Krishna said, 'Dharma is the main thing. This is the opinion of the Purva Mimansa school of thought.' The gopis said, 'No; the opinion of the Uttar Mimansa is right.'
यदहरेव विजेत् तदहरेव प्रब्रजेत्। *'Yadahare`va viraje`t tadahare`va pravraje`t.'*
We have become प्रेम-संन्यासिनी *pre`ma-sannyaasinee* (given up the world for love), and come to you. Your sermon does not apply to us.'
'No! No!' said Shri Krishna. 'Human beings should adhere to their own Dharma.'
The gopis said, 'We should give up the world when we get renunciation.'
I will tell you more about this discussion tomorrow.

Om Shantih! Shantih! Shantih!

Raas-Rasa

Chapter II

I will first tell you a little about the basic rasa of raas. Actually, the word 'raas' signifies many meanings. The letters र *ra* and ल *la* are considered the same, and so, 'raas' becomes लास्य *laasya*, meaning dance. Since ल *la* and ड *da* are also considered to be the same, raas means dance. Regarding the experience of how the rasa of raas is experienced, the experts on literature have four opinions that are supplementary.

One opinion is that Shri Krishna was born in the area of Vrindavan – Vrajabhoomi – five thousand years ago. Shri Radharani and the gopis who were a part of her essence, also manifested at the same time. Some of them were नित्य सिद्ध *nitya siddhaa* (had achieved prema bhakta from before), some were साधन सिद्ध *saadhan siddhaa* (achieved prema bhakta through efforts for spiritual progress), and some were कृपा सिद्ध *kripaa siddhaa* (achieved prema bhakti through Grace). There are many grades of prema in the gopis. Some were अज्ञात-यौवना *agyaata-yauvanaa* (absolutely innocent and very young), some were मुग्धा *mugdhaa* (entranced), some were प्रौढ़ा *praudha* (experienced) some were परकीया *parakeeya* (hostile), some were कुमारी *kumaari* (unwed), etc.

When we listen to discourses about them – or see a performance of the raas leela – our mind is immersed in the raas that took place five thousand years ago. Then, we obtain the rasa of that परोक्ष *paroksha* (unseen) raas leela of long ago. We remember it, and obtain the enriching experience of the raas.

When we read the Shrimad Bhagwat, in some places it seems that neither was Shri Krishna a young man, nor were the gopis young women. Shri Krishna was less than eleven years old, and the gopis were even younger. Shri Krishna was seven when He lifted up the Giriraj (King of the mountains) Govardhan and the raas took place when He was eight or nine years old. These days, we see children being dressed up like grown-ups, and made to talk and act like adults. It seems to me that this raas of long ago is described in a similar way, as a dance of a young man with young women. So, those who cast aspersions at the raas leela being profane should feel satisfied that a boy who was less than eleven, and girls who were even younger, were merely imitating the gestures of the grown-ups.

एकादशसमा स्तत्र गूढार्चिः सबलोऽवसत्।

E`kaadashasamaa statra goodhaarchih savalovasat.

This is written clearly in the third canto of the Shrimad Bhagwat. However, when we reflect upon this leela, the description is as though a young man is frolicking with young women, even though they may be just imitating their elders. Then, our mind enters that unknown leela, and identifies with it, and we experience the rasa that we imagine them to have experienced.

Another method is that when we hear the descriptions of this leela, and see it enacted, and then the raas leela described in the ballads begins to glimmer before our eyes. We obtain the रसास्वादन *rasaasvaadana* (the flavor of the rasa).

The first is the opinion of the followers of the Nyaya school of thought among the literates. The second is the opinion of the Mimansak (researchers) of literature. The third is the opinion of Abhinav Gupta, of the Kashmiri Shaivas. They say that it is immaterial whether the leela actually happened or not. Our mind becomes Vrindavan when we do श्रवण *shravana* (listen to), or दर्शन *darshan* (see) of this leela. The Yamuna begins to flow in our mind. The Kadam Kunj (the arbor of Kadam trees) comes into our mind. Our mind takes on the form of Krishna, it becomes the gopis, and begins to do raas in the Vrindavan of our mind. For a little while, we identify with that situation, and get a direct glimpse of that rasa.

So, the order is that the first opinion is the paroksha rasa of the Naiyayiks. The second opinion is that of the Mimansaks – of a प्रत्यक्ष *pratyaksha* (seen; experienced by the senses), and the third is that of our Bharat Muni – Abhinav Gupta, who defined नाट्यशास्त्र *naatyashaastra* (the Shastra of Performing Arts).

The fourth is the method of the Vedantis, and that is, that the स्थायी भावावच्छिन्न चैतन्य *sthaayee bhaavaavachhinna chaitanya* (the Consciousness of that enduring love of which we are always aware) becomes one with the आलम्बन भावावच्छिन्न *aalamban bhaavaachhinna chaitanya* (the supporting factors of the feeling that is not separate from the Consciousness), then we are Krishna, we are Radha, we are the gopis, and we are Vrindavan. We multiply ourselves into many, and experience our own rasa. This is the Atmarasa. Madhusudan Saraswati has given an excellent description of this rasa in 'Bhaktirasayana.' The people of Vrindavan say that this is the rasa that is predominant in 'Bhaktirasamritasindhu' written by Rupa Goswami. Even before his time, Mahakavi Karnapura has established the prema rasa in 'Alankara-Kaustubh.' Prema is an independent rasa.

Bhavabhuti has established the करुणा रस *karunaa rasa* (the rasa of pathos).

एको रसः करुण एव। *E`ko rasah karunaa e`va.*

Bhojdeva has established the श्रृंगार रस *shringaara rasa* (the rasa of romantic love).

श्रृंङ्गारमेव रसनाद्रसनाम्ना *Shringaarame`va rasanaadrasanaamnaa.*

And, Shri Rupa Goswami established the bhakti rasa (the rasa of loving devotion), and stated that it has five categories. They are, शान्त *shaanta* (tranquil), दास्य *daasya* (servitude), सख्य *sakhya* (friendship), वात्सल्य *vaatsalya* (maternal), and shringar.

Madhusudan Saraswati has first given a sharp rebuke to the literates. 'You consider रौद्र *raudra* (anger) to be a rasa, बीभत्स *beebhatsa* (hideous) to be a rasa, and भयानक *bhayaanaka* (frightening) to have the properties of rasa; but you do not the rasa in bhakti? Doesn't bhakti have संचारी *sanchaari* (rhetoric that strengthens the main sentiment)? Doesn't it have व्यभिचारी *vyabhichaari* (unchaste attitudes)? Aren't the उद्दीपन विभाव *uddeepana vibhaava* (the awakening factors) and आलम्बन विभाव *aalamban vibhaava* (supporting factors) present in bhakti? Isn't the स्थायी भाव *sthaayee bhaava* (the enduring feeling) present in bhakti? Then, why don't you people accept bhakti to be a rasa?'

Bhakti is something that is full of rasa; it is a thing to be savored. The special quality in bhaktas is that they believe that Bhagwan is such that He becomes a small child and plays in Maiya's lap. He manifests with the बघनखा *vaaghnakhaa* (a pendent with tiger claws, believed to protect children) round His neck, and a रक्षा तिलक *rakshaa tilak* (a protective mark) on the forehead. Maiya showers love on Him. He becomes a sakha of the gwaal baal, and turns into a young man when He is with the gopis. This is the remarkable quality of Bhagwan. Actually, all of them are children – the gopis as well as Shri Krishna.

However, in the episode of raas, the Lord's unimaginable infinite, benevolent leela changes Shri Krishna – who is the form of Dharma – into a young man. It changes the gopis – who are the form of धर्मी *dharmee* (one who believes in Dharma) – into young women. The leela manifests the natural qualities of young lovers in them, and they frolic with Bhagwan.

There is another factor. The modern intellectuals have modern outlooks. The Arya Samaji, Brahmo Samaji, and others, do not approve of the raas leela. They say that it is an interpolation inserted later on. Lokmanya Tilak, Gandhiji, and Vinoba Bhave did not approve of the Gita's ascertainment of Sanyas, because they were Karma Yogis. They did not approve of renouncing the world. Similarly, these people feel that this leela with the gopis – the raas leela – is the Sanyas leela. It contains the philosophy of the Uttar Mimansa (the later philosophy about righteous living). Shri Krishna

takes the side of the Purva Mimansa (the earlier philosophy), saying that life should be filled with Dharma. The gopis speak in favor of Uttar Mimansa, saying that once a person obtains prema for Bhagwan, and renunciation for the world, he should give up the world and immerse himself in भगवद् रस *bhagvad-rasa* (the rasa of Bhagwan).

So, वस्तुतो निवृत्ति रासपञ्चाध्यायी '*Vastuto nivrittipare`yam raasapanchaadhyaayee.*' In fact, the Raas Panchadhyayi contains the description of निवृत्तिलीला *nivritti leelaa* (the leela of withdrawing from the world). The gopis leave everything and go to Shri Krishna, and they have a debate. Shri Krishna says that to look after the home and family, and follow the Dharma of a house-holder is the right thing for them. The gopis say that the right thing for them is to have prema for Bhagwan, and have an inclination to renounce the world. Shri Krishna is compelled to accept defeat in this debate. Purva Mimansa is always defeated by Uttar Mimansa.

There is a hidden factor in this. Love does not flow towards the defeater; it flows towards the one who is defeated. The flow of the rasa of prema – the Ganga of prema – flows from the Himalayan peak down to the plains lower down. Similarly, the Ganga of prema does not flow into the life of someone who is seated high on the throne of arrogance. It comes to the one who is lower, bends his head, and has humility. Shri Krishna accepted defeat before the gopis. The gopis gave such irrefutable arguments!

मैवं विभोऽहंति भवान् गदितुं नृशंसं सन्त्यज्य सर्वविषयांस्तव पादमूलम्।
भक्ता भजस्व दुरवग्रह मा तयजास्मान् देवो यथाऽऽदिपुरुषो भजते मुमुक्षून्।। १०.२९.३१

Maivam vibhohanti bhavaan gaditum nrishansam santyajya sarvavishayaanstava paadamoolam,
Bhaktaa bhajasva duravagraha maa tyajaasmaan de`vo yathaadipurusho bhajate`mumukshoon.
(Bhagwat 10. 29. 31)

This is definitely Uttar Mimansa – भजते मुमुक्षून् *bhajate` mumukshoon. Maivam maivam*. 'What You are saying, Shri Krishna, is faulty. It is wrong. It is illogical. We have given up the interactive world. सन्त्यज्य सर्वविषयाँस्तव पादमूलम् भक्ताः *Santyajya sarvavishayaanstava paadamoolam bhaktaah.* We have come to You after giving up everything in this world.'

Shri Shukdevji Maharaj has testified that this is true. Here was no trace of desire in the gopis' heart – तदर्थ विनिवर्तित सर्वकामाः *tadarthavinivartita sarvakaamaah.* The gopis had given up all other desires for Shri Krishna's sake. Shri Shukdevji says, 'The gopis have given up all worldly desires.' The gopis say, 'We have given up all विषय *vishay* (sense objects).' This is not

a worldly sport; it is a divine leela of love for Bhagwan. There is no trace of lust in it. The gopis have stated, in every sentence,

यत्पत्यपत्यसुहृदामनृवृत्तिरङ्ग स्त्रीणां स्वधर्म इति धर्मविदा त्वयोक्तम्।
अस्त्वेवमेतदुपदेशपदे त्वयीशे प्रष्ठो भवांस्तनुभृतां किल बन्धुरात्मा।। १०.२९.३२

Yatpatyapatyasuhridaamanuvrittisanga streenaam svadharma iti dharmavidaa tvayoktam,
Astve`vame`tadupade`shapade` tvayeeshe` prashtho bhavaanstanubritaam kila bandhuraatmaa.
(Bhagwat 10. 29. 32)

'You are the Atma. Love for the husband is love for the Atma; so is love for another man. Love for our well-wishers is also love for the Atma. All those we love in this world, are loved for the sake of the Atma. पुत्रात् यो वित्तात्यो अन्यस्मात् सर्वस्मात् प्रेयान् *Putraat yo vittaatyo anyasmaat sarvasmaat pre`yaan.* The Atma is dearer than the son, dearer than wealth, and dearer than a husband or wife. You are the Atma, and that is why we have prema for You. You are the सर्वाधिष्ठान *sarvaadhishthaana* (the substratum of everything), स्वयंप्रकाश *svayamprakaasha* (self-effulgent), our Atma. You are the non-dual Brahman. So, just as a Sanyasi gives up everything in the world and places his faith in his Atma, his essence, that is the Brahman, we place our faith in You.'

The gopis revealed the complete faith they had in Shri Krishna. 'If You don't accept us, we will meditate on You till our body drops dead. Then we will become Your essence. Since the day we touched Your feet, we have not felt like even standing in front of anyone else.'

'O gopis,' said Shri Krishna. 'You want to stay at My feet, but there is always a crowd of bhaktas there.'

'Yes, we will stay in the crowd.'

'Yes, but your सौत *sauta* (the husband's other wife), Tulsi, stays there.'

'So what? We will also stay there. Look; even Laxmi prefers to stay at Your feet, rather than on Your chest. So, we gopis can also leave everything and stay there.

त्वत्सुन्दरस्मितनिरीक्षणतीव्रकामतप्तात्मनां पुरुषभूषण देहि दास्यम्। १०.२९.३८

Tvastundarasmitanireekshanateevrakaamataptaatmanaam purushabhooshana de`hi daasyam.
(Bhagwat 10. 29. 38)

We are captivated by Your beauty, Your smile, and Your eyes. Give us the opportunity to serve You. We want to serve You, to give You comfort and pleasure.'

So this, सर्वापि सैव परं कामो न विद्यते '*Sarvaapi saiva param kaama na vidyate`*,' all the actions are done there, but Shri Vallabhacharyaji says that there is not even a whiff of lust. The gopis say,

वीक्ष्यालकावृतं मुखं तव कुण्डलश्रीगण्डस्थलाधरसुधं हसितावलोकम्।
दत्ताभयं च भुजदण्डयुगं विलोक्य वक्षः श्रियैकरमणं च भवाम दास्यः।। १०.२९.३९

Veekshyaalakaavritam nukham tava
kundalashreegandasthalaadharasudham hasitaavalokam,
Dattaabhyam cha bhujadandayugam vilokya vakshah shreeyaikaramanam
cha bhavaam daasyah.
(Bhagwat 10. 29. 39)

'Your black curls are dancing on Your cheeks. Your dangling ear rings touch Your cheeks. The nectar of Your lips touches Your cheeks. Your smile and Your glances – the Gnan in Your glance, and the Anand in Your smile – create a combination of Gnan and Anand. Your broad chest that gives अभय दान *abhay daan* (the gift of being free of fear) all attract us. We want to serve You.

का स्त्रयङग ते कलपदायतमूर्च्छितेन सम्मोहिताऽऽर्यचरितान्न चलोत्त्रिलोक्याम्।
त्रैलोक्यसौभगमिदं च निरीक्ष्य रूपं यद् गोद्विजद्रुममृगाः पुलकान्यबिभ्रन्।। १०.२९.४०

Kaa stryanga te` kalapaadaayatamoorchhite`na
sammohitaaryacharitaannaa chalotrilokyaam,
Trailokyasaubhagamidam cha nireekshya roopam yad
godvijadrumamrigaah pulakaanyabibhran.
(Bhagwat 10. 29. 40).

Seeing the sweetness of Your form – the form that emits waves of divine beauty – cows thrill with love. Birds are filled with bliss. Trees start oozing sap that is as sweet as honey. Creepers begin to smile. Deer gaze at You with their large eyes. When this is the state of trees, birds, cows, and deer, how can it be possible for us – Your gopis – to stay away from You?'

The gopis expressed their anguish about what would happen if Shri Krishna refused to accept them ?

सिञ्चाङ्ग नस्त्वदधरामृतपूरकेण हासावलोककलगीतजहृच्छयाग्निम्।
नो चेद् वयं विरहजाग्न्युपयुक्तदेहा ध्यानेन याम पदयोः पदवीं सखे ते।। १०.२९.३५

Sinchaanga tastvadadharaamritapoorake`na
haasaavalokakalageetajahrichhayaagnim,
No che`d vayam virahajaagnyupayuktade`haa dhyaane`na yaama padayoh
padaveem sakhe` te`.
(Bhagwat 10. 29. 35)

'We will give up our lives in the fire of meditation. We have no intention of going back! Has anyone ever gone back, after having come to Your feet?'

Please note one thing; with regard to Bhagwan, the jeeva can have two states. One is that he can experience that he is with Bhagwan. He can feel, 'Bhagwan is in my heart, He is before my eyes. I am laughing with Him talking to Him, joining Him, and playing with Him.' A person who experiences this will have the experience of Paramananda (supreme bliss). (If he does not have this experience, he should develop it by experiencing विरह *viraha* (the pain of separation).

Viraha contains such an intense yearning that the heart leaves its place of आसक्ति *aasakti* (attachment). Otherwise, everyone in the world is attached to some object with a name and form, in this world. We need to experience the pangs of viraha. We need to lament, 'It is a matter of great sorrow that I remain alive for even a minute, without being united with the infinite सत्ता *sattaa* (existence) because of which I am alive; because of whose Gnan I know things, because of whose Anand I feel happy; the one who inspires me; in whose breath I breathe, and who is the apple of my eye.'

अमून्यधन्यानि दिनान्तराणि हरे तबालोकनमन्तरेण *Amoonyadhanyaani dinaantaraani hare` tavaalokanamantare`na.*

'It is quite deplorable that my days are slipping by without getting Your darshan (vision).

अनाथबन्धो करुणैकसिन्धो हा हन्त हा हन्त कथं नयामि।

Anaathabandho karunaikasindho haa hanta haa hanta katham nayaami.

O Master! Please tell me, how am I to go through this difficult time?'

हे दैव हे दयति हे भुवनैकबन्धो
हे कृष्ण हे चपल हे करुणैकसिन्धो
हा नाथ हा रमण हा नयनाभिराम
हा हा कदानुभवितासि पद द्दशीमें!

He` de`va he` dayati he` bhuvanaikabandho he` krishna he` chapala he` karunaikasindho,
Haa naatha haa ramana haa nayanaabhiraama haa haa kadaanubhavitaasi pada drishorme`!

When will that moment come into my life, when I will obtain Your darshan with these eyes of mine?'

It is foolish to try to weigh and assess the possibility or impossibility of having Bhagwan's darshan. The intense desire for His darshan is more important than the darshan itself.

प्रणयपटुपिपासापीडितानद्य प्राणान् कथमपि कथयाऽहं हा कथं सान्त्वयामि।
असहनिजविकण्ठाः कण्ठमुत्कण्ठयाऽऽप्तानुनु तब मुखमिन्दुं द्रष्टुमेते त्वरन्ति।।

Pranayapatupipaasaapeeditaanadya praanaan kathamapi kathayaaham haa katham saantvayaami,

Asahanijavikanthaah kanthamutkanthayaaptaananu tava mukhamindu drashtume`te` tvaranti.

'My life spirit suffers acutely because of my intense thirst for being with You, my Beloved. How can I hold it back for even one moment? My life spirit can't even endure my breathing. It cannot bear its own anguish. My life spirit has come up to my throat in its eagerness to fly to You. It is impatient to get a darshan of Your lotus face. It is in a great hurry.'

There are two states in viraha. One is the state of अयोग *ayoga*, and the other is a state of वियोग *viyoga*. Ayoga is the viraha when we have not yet met the Beloved, and are anxious to meet Him. Viyoga is the viraha of being separated, after having met Him once. This is filled with an anxious restlessness. Both these types are seen in the lives of the gopis.

Only some rare Mahapurush (great Saint) can say that a person who has had the experience of meeting Bhagwan has merged into the Ishwara. However, as far as the experience of the Ishwara's viraha is concerned, anyone can have this experience. The methods of experiencing the two kinds of prema for the Ishwara – that of separation and that of meeting Him – are not taught in schools and colleges. The common prema of the world always contains a degree of desire. There is a desire to enjoy a physical relationship with the person who is present physically. There is a desire to see, touch, be with, and conjugate, which makes us worldly people.

However, when the Beloved is hidden, and we have an ardent desire to be with Him, there is no physical consideration. We forget our body. Our mind experiences the union or the separation. We become immersed in that mental experience. This has been mentioned earlier.

दुःसहप्रेष्ठविरहतीव्रतापधुताशुभाः।
ध्यानप्राप्ताच्युताश्लेषनिर्वृत्याक्षीणमङ्गलाः।।
तमेव परमात्मानं जारबुद्ध्यापि सङ्गताः।
जहुर्गुणमयं देहं सद्यः प्रक्षीणबन्धनाः।। १०-२०, १०-११

Dusahapre`shthavirahateevrataapadhutaashubhaah,
Dhyaanapraaptaachyutaashle`shanirvrityaaksheenamangalaah.
Tame`va paramaatmaanam jaarabuddhayaapi sangataah,
Juhurgunamayam de`ham sadyah praksheenabandhanaah.
(Bhagwat 10 – 20, 10 – 11)

When the gopis experienced the anguish of separation, the intensity of their suffering melted their heart. All the worldly संस्कार *sanskaara* (subtle subconscious impressions) of several past lives' attachments and possessive feelings, were erased. The विकार *vikaara* (mental distortions) were burnt. The fire in the heart of the gopis was so fierce that the combined sins of the past,

present and future, of all the people in all three worlds began to tremble. 'This suffering of the gopis is so great that all of us put together are incapable of inflicting anything remotely close to it.'
And then, when the gopis experienced the joy of meeting Shri Krishna in their meditations, all the पुण्य *punya* (fruit of meritorious deeds) of the past, present and future, of all the people in all the three worlds gathered, and paled in comparison. 'We do not have the capacity to bestow this degree of joy to anyone, ever!' they said. Hence, the purpose of describing the raas leela is that people get the experience of the intense sorrow of viyoga (separation), and the intense joy of संयोग *sanyoga* (union) with Bhagwan.
Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has said: सङ्गविरहविकल्पे '*Sangamavirahavikalpe*`. If someone were to ask me whether I want viyog or sanyog, I will ask for viyog. सैषा सैषा द्वैतवादः *Saishaa saishaa dvaitavaadah.*' The Sahitya Darpan says, 'What is this 'advaita'? प्रातादेशा पथ पथि च स कोयमद्वैतवादः *Praataade`shaa pathipathi cha sa koyamadvaitavaadah.* What is this theory of non-dualism? All round people speak of Advaita!' So, this description of the raas is given in order to awaken in our hearts, the joy of meeting the Ishwara, and the sorrow of being separated from Him. The description of the raas is an example of the bhakti in sanyog and viyog.
It was necessary to expose the acute eagerness the gopis had for being with Shri Krishna. Else, how would people have known about it? Shri Krishna's refused to accept them. He told them to go back to their homes. मा कृद्वं बन्धुसाध्वसम् '*Maa kridvam bandhusaadhvasam* – your family is worried about you. You children are crying, and your husbands are hungry – and you have come here?' Had He not rebuked them and told them to go back to their homes, the deep love in their hearts would never have been known to any other. When the gopis spoke of their feelings, पुरुषभूषण देहि दास्यम् '*Purushabhooshana de`hi daasyam*,' Shri Krishna said, 'Very well.'
A bhakta should have the kind of avid eagerness, excitement and longing to meet Bhagwan that the gopis had. The purpose of the Lord's Avatar – परित्राणाय साधूनां *paritraayaana saadhunaam* (to save the pious people) – was fulfilled.

इति विक्लवितं तासां श्रुत्वा योगेश्वरेश्वरः।
प्रहस्य सदयं गोपीरात्मारामोऽप्यरीरतम्।। १०-३९-४२

Iti viklavitam taasaam shrutvaa yoge`shvare`shvarah, prahasya sadayam gopeeraatmaaraamopyareeramat.
(Bhagwat 10. 39. 42)

The gopis' intense yearning for Shri Krishna was revealed. It is not that Shri Krishna was unaware of the depth of their love. Bhagwan has no need to test

anyone. Only those who don't know need to test, to find out the depth of the love in the other. Bhagwan is सर्वान्तर्यामी *sarvaantaryaami* (knows what is in everybody's heart). He even hears the footsteps of an ant. He knows the depth of love and level of eligibility of every person.

However Bhagwan wanted people to be aware of the acute eagerness of a bhakta, and his anguish at being separated from the Lord. That is why He induced the gopis to reveal their innermost feelings – इति विक्लवितं तासां श्रुत्वा योगेश्वरेश्वरः *iti viklavitam taasaam shrutvaa yoge`shvare`shvarah*. He wanted everybody to be aware of the gopis' deep and pure love.

There are many Yogis who do Yoga for themselves. A Yogeshwara is one who obtains the fruit of Yoga without doing Yoga. Shri Krishna is the Ishwara of the Yogeshwaras. He is in a position where no Yoga is needed, and no fruit of any Yoga needs to be given. This Bhagwan, full of rasa, is आत्मारामोऽपि *aatmaaraamopi* – He has no need for any other. He is completely happy and fulfilled within Himself.

Shri Krishna started smiling. 'Gopis, how well you hide your feelings! How you pretend! How skillfully you keep your feelings hidden! Today, everything has been exposed!' प्रहस्य सदयं *Prahasya sadayam* – Shri Krishna's heart is filled with compassion.

Now, the Lord wanted to start the raas that dissolves the pride in the gopis. So – आत्मारामोप्यरीरमत् *Aatmaaraamopyareeramat*. The Vrajavasis (people of Vraja) say that 'Atma' means 'Radhika'. In the sects of Haridasji, Harivanshji, and Shri Harivyasdevji – the three main sects who savor the rasa of Shri Krishna, and are called 'Hari' – the descriptions given are such that I hesitate to speak on it outside Vrindavan. This is the special feeling of the people who live in Vrindavan.

मोकों तो भावती ठौर प्यार के नयनन में
प्यारो भयो चाहे मेरे नैनन के तारे

Moko to bhaavatee thaura pyaare`ke` nayanana mein,
Pyaaro bhayo chaahe` me`re` nainana ke` tare`.

'I always long to stay in the eyes of my Beloved. That is what appeals to me. And, my Beloved wants that He should always be the apple of my eye.'

जोई जोई प्यारो करै सोई मोहि भावे।
जोई मोहि भावे सोई सोई करे प्यारा।।

Joyee joyee pyaaro kare` soyee mohi bhaave`,
Joyee mohi bhaave` soyee soyee kare` pyaaro.

'My Beloved does all the things that I like, and I like all that He does.' This kind of identification removes the triple factors of the प्रेमी *pre`mi* (lover),

प्रियतम *priyatam* (Beloved) and प्रेम *pre`ma* (love). The lover and the loved one become one.

So, the meaning of the word 'Atma' is Radha. It is written in 'Shri Krishnayamal' that Radha – or Radhika – is a name of the Atma. The one, who is the dearest of all, is called the Atma; and the आराधिका *aaraadhikaa* (the one who worships, or the one who is worshipped) is Radhika. She is the one whose आराधना *aaraadhanaa* (worship) is done by Bhagwan Himself. Or, Radhika is the one who does the aradhana of Bhagwan. That is not the case. It is being stated here that it is similar to the great जीवन्मुक्त *jeevanmukta* (liberated) Mahapurush being fully content, established in his own Atma. Just as Brahma is Atmaram (happy within his Self), so is Shri Krishna. They have no desire and no need for any other. However, Shri Krishna sees, 'these अज्ञानी *agnaani* (without Gnan) people are turned away from Me. They are filled with the sorrows of the world.' So, He frolics with them without having the slightest need or desire for personal gratification. He does this to liberate them from all worldly sorrows, and give them a taste of His own supreme rasa. The use of the word अरीरमत् *areeramat* indicates that He gave happiness to the gopis.

The Lord first wandered round Vrindavan with the gopis. Vrindavan means a वन *van* (forest) of Vrinda (the Tulsi plant); a forest of love. Vrindavan means the forest of Vrinda, the lady loved so deeply by Vishnu Bhagwan that He gave up His godliness, and romanced with her. Tulsi is always placed on the head of Shaligram (a round stone worshipped as Vishnu Bhagwan). Vrindavan is Vrinda's forest. There are no harmful trees in it. It is the forest that is pervaded by Radha – who is also Vrinda. It is a forest that protects good people. This is Vrindavan! Look at its creepers; look at the trees! See this earth, saturated with rasa and prema! See the moonlight that fills the heart with joy!

Shri Krishna sings. He plays the flute. You know that music is the speech of love. It cannot be taught. Every little child in Vraja knows how to sing, without getting any lessons! He doesn't need to be taught how to sing.

जो रस बरस रह्यो बरसाने सो रस बैकुण्ठहुँ में नाहि *Jo rasa barasa rahyo barasaane` so rasa vaikuntha mein naahi.* The rasa that showers constantly in Barsana – the birthplace of Radha, is not found even in Vaikunth, the abode of Lord Vishnu. Small children sing blithely, because music is the voice of love. The people of Vraja are immersed in prema, as they walk. Their feet skip and prance in rhythm, and their voice is automatically in tune.

Shri Krishna says, 'Look at the moonlight.' The gopis say, 'Krishna! Krishna!' Shri Krishna says, 'Look at the beauty of the forest.' The Gopis

say, 'Krishna! Krishna!' Shri Krishna says, 'See how the Jamuna flows gently, how beautiful her blue waters are.' The gopis say, 'Krishna! Krishna!' Shri Krishna says, 'See the sandy bank of the Jamuna.' The gopis say, 'Krishna! Krishna!'

Imagine that Jamunaji has used the ripples, like hands, to create a mingling of black and white grains of sand on her banks. श्याम-श्याम *Shyaama-shyaama* (dark-dark) Krishna, and गौर-गौर *gaura-gaura* (fair-fair) Radhika. It is as though countless Krishna and Radha have turned into grains of sand, and are embracing each other. That bank of the Yamuna, the sandy beach of Yamuna! The leela continues –

बाहुप्रसार-परिम्भकरालकोरू नीवीस्तनालभननर्मनखग्रपातैः।
क्ष्वेल्यावलोकहसितैव्रजसुन्दरीणामुत्तम्भयन् रतिपतिं रमयाश्चकार।।

Baahuprasaara-parimbhakaraalakoroo neeveestanaalabhananarmanakhaagrapaataih,
Kshve`lyaavalokahasitaivrajasundareenaamuttambhyan ratipatim ramayaashchakaara.

Shri Krishna spreads wide His arms and dances. He holds the gopi in a close embrace as He dances. He catches her hand and dances. He touches the sand as He dances. All the modes of dancing are used. उत्तम्भयन् रतिपतिं *'Uttambhayan ratipatim.'* Kama (desire), the husband of Rati (passionate desire) descended from the sky. He saw the scene and was stunned. He stood as though he had been turned into a pillar – उत्तम्भयन रतिपतिं-उत उर्ध्वमेव स्तम्भयन् *uttambayan ratipatim – uta urdhvame`va stambhayan*. Kama did not dare to go before Shri Krishna. He fell unconscious. He lost his senses. This was the kind of leela Shri Krishna did.

Now, in such a leela, where was the scope for any विघ्न *vighna* (obstacle)? Vighna arises when the sakha (friends) leave Shri Krishna behind, and wander off to admire the beauty of the forest. Vighna comes when Mother Yashoda puts down Shri Krishna from her lap, and goes to take off the pot of milk from the fire. Maiya's vision was diverted to the object that served Shri Krishna. The sakha's attention was diverted by the beauty of the forest, and they walked into the mouth of Aghasur (the demon in the form of a huge serpent.

The gopis' attention, however, never goes to any other. They don't see the beauty of the forest; nor do look at anyone else. They don't even look at other gopis. Then, where did their mind go to? It focused on themselves, on their own beauty. Where is the vighna in prema? The attention of a premi (one who loves) does not go to the world, or any other, or even the Self. The 'I' emerges in prema. 'I am so lovely, so appealing, and so fortunate, that

Krishna is charmed by me. He follows me.' Ego arose. Vanity is a great obstacle in prema.

तासां तत् सौभगमिंद वीक्ष्य मानं च केशवः।
प्रशमाय प्रसादाय तत्रैवान्तरधीयत।। १०-२९-४८

Taasaam tat saubhagamida veekshya maanam cha ke`shavah,
Prashamaaya prasaadaaya tatraivaantaradheeyata.
(Bhagwat 10. 29. 48)

They disdained Shri Krishna. Unless the 'I' is thrown out, the rasa of prema will not ripen. In prema, the obstacle is no तत् '*tat'* (that); it is not इदं *idam'* (this); the obstacle in prema is the अहं '*aham'* (I). It is internal. If prema had considerations of idam or tat, it would be adulterated. It would not remain pure love. However, when the aham comes in, the happiness of the Beloved is no longer the focus, even if the love remains pure.

Bhagwan said, प्रशमाय प्रसादाय '*Prashamaaya prasaadaaya* – I should shower Grace on them. I should be benevolent and be free of any reservations.' How? 'It is essential to subdue the ego that has arisen in their mind.'

Therefore, तत्रैव अन्तरधीयत *'Tatraiva antaradheeyata.'* He did not go anywhere. The gopi was in her own world of self-admiration. 'I dance so well! I sing so well! I am so beautiful!' She was intoxicated with such thoughts. Her ओढ़नी *odhnee* (half sari) fell off. Shri Krishna swiftly picked it up and covered Himself with it. He began to dance along with the gopis as though He was one of them.

Then He said, 'Oh! Where is Krishna?' Everyone began to look for Krishna. They became so desperate, so agitated, that He was nowhere to be seen, that they began to see the Atma in everything.

तास्ता विचेष्टा जगृहुस्तदात्मिकाः। १०-३०-२

Taastaa viche`shtaa jagrihustadaatmikaah.
(Bhagwat 10. 30. 2)

The gopis asked the trees. They asked the creepers. They asked the Tulsi shrubs and Jasmine creeper, 'Where is Krishna? Did you see where Krishna went?' Then, they forgot the circumstances, and began to enact His leelas.

The gopis were immersed in Shri Krishna to such an extent that – कृष्णोऽहं पश्यत गतिं ललिताम् *krishnoham pashya gatim lalitaam* – look! I am Krishna! See how I dance!' 'Look! I am Krishna. See how I lift up the Govardhan.' The gopis were so totally immersed in thoughts of Shri Krishna that they forgot that they were gopis. They lost themselves in His leela.

Tomorrow, I will tell you what happened after this.

Om Shantih! Shantih! Shantih!

Raas Rasa

Chapter III

We feel love for a person who has the qualities of humility, decency, and love. The gopis left everything to obtain Shri Krishna. This is a निवृत्ति लीला *nivritti leelaa* – a leela of withdrawing from worldly activities. The gopis came to Shri Krishna after giving up the four Purusharthas (principal achievements) of Artha (material wealth), Dharma, Kama (worldly desires) and Moksha (liberation from rebirth). They also gave up their लोक-प्रलोक *loka-paraloka* (the comforts of this world and the lands after death). Shri Krishna told them to go back. He showed doubt regarding the rightness of their actions. Then the gopis used the arguments of the Uttar Mimansa philosophy to refute the Purva Mimansa school of thought. Shri Krishna lost the argument, and accepted what the gopis said.

After Shri Krishna acquiesced, the music started, and the dancing commenced. Later, the vanity that is an obstacle in prema arose. The equilibrium of rasa in prema is destroyed by vanity! The special quality of the prema of Vraja is that they consider prema to be समरस *sama-rasa*, where both the lover and the Beloved get equal rasa. Shri Krishna had as much prema for the gopis as they had for Him. The prema of the gopis was as deep as Shri Krishna's prema. Prema is increased when the lover sees the prema of the Beloved. Prema is the उद्दीपन *uddeepana* (awakening factor) of prema. This is what those who are learned in the prema rasa have stated. How will the prema in my heart increase? It will increase when I see prema in the heart of the premi.

One day, Shri Radharani noticed that Shri Krishna was looking at her from behind some trees and creepers. He thought that Radharani could not see how the sight of her delighted Him. When Shri Radharani saw Shri Krishna's delight at seeing her, she was delighted, too. Shri Krishna understood that Shri Radharani is delighted to see His delight, and felt doubly elated. This doubled Shri Radhikarani's happiness. Now, a wave of सुख *sukha* (complete happiness) came from both sides. They forget themselves. Shri Krishna forgot Himself, and Shri Radharani forgot herself. The people of Vraja – who are connoisseurs of the leela of Shri Radha-Krishna sing –

न आदि न अन्त विलास करैं दोऊ
लाल प्रिया में भई न चिन्हारी।
Na aadi na anta vilaasa kare` dou,

Laala priyamain bhayee na chinhaaree.

Shri Krishna turns into Radha, and Radha has become Shri Krishna. Who can separate them? Who can separate the water in the ripple from the water in the lake? They become one. That means, they lose their sense of individuality. The rasa of prema is the अहं-भाव *aham-bhaava* – the feeling of 'I'. The aham-bhava arose in the gopis as they danced.

You see, our रसिक *rasika* (lovers of Shri Krishna leela) say that the aham-bhava does not arise in the gopis' heart. The gopis merely acted as though it did. Why did they do this play acting? They did it so that people would know that the ego is an obstacle in prema rasa. They wanted people to learn this. And, Shri Krishna disappeared.

तत्रैवान्तरधीयत *Tatraivaantaradheeyata.* The commentary on this is that Shri Krishna did not go anywhere. He hid Himself adroitly, without going anywhere. The Vrajavasis say that when the gopis became engrossed in admiring their own beauty, sweetness and love, their odhnis slipped off. Shri Krishna quickly picked up one odhni and covered Himself with it. He became a gopi.

The gopis were unable to guess where Shri Krishna was. The old time rasiks of prema will know that I am now talking about Rasa Darshan – the philosophy of rasa. The ego of being a premi does not arise in prema.

न क्षोदीयानपि सखि मम प्रेमगन्धो मुकुन्दे
क्रन्दतीं मां निजसुभगताख्यापनाय प्रतीहि।
खेलद्वंशी वलयिनमनालोक्यं तं वक्त्रबिम्बं
ध्वस्तालम्बा यदह महहप्राणकींट बिभर्मि।।

Na kshodeeyaanapi sahki mama pre`magandho mukunde` krandanteem maam nijasubhagataakhyaapanaaya prateehi,
Khe`ladvanshee valayinamanaalokya tam vaktrabimbam dhvastaalambaa yadaha mahahapraanakeetam vibharmi.

Lalita sakhi said to Shri Radharani, 'Swamini (Mistress), you are an ocean of love.'

Priyaji replied, 'There is not even a whiff of prema in me.'

'Then why do you weep, and become restless for Him?'

'To advertise my good fortune! Otherwise, how could I still be living without seeing Him, on whose lips the flute is always playing? I nurture my प्राण *praana* (life spirit) even though it stings me every moment. What greater suffering could there be?'

Shri Krishna disappeared to subdue the ego of the gopis, and to cleanse their minds. This is a trick to remove the hardness that comes into the heart.

Five points are given in the second chapter of the Raas Panchadhyayi. One is the sorrow, desperation, and anguish in the विरह *viraha* (pain of separation) of the Beloved.

उत्तापी पुटपाकतोऽपि गरलं ग्रामादपि क्षोभणे
दम्भोलेरपि दुःसहः कटुरलं हृन्मग्नशल्यादपि।
तीव्रः प्रौढविसूचिका निचयतोऽप्युच्चैर्ममायं बली
मर्माणयद्य भिनत्ति गोकुलयतेर्विश्लेषजन्मा ज्वरः।।

Uttaapee putapookatopi garalam graamaadapi kshobhane` dambhole`rapi duhsahah katuralam hrinmagnashalyaadapi,
Teevrah praudhavisoochikaa nichayatopyuchchairmamaayam balee mamaniyadya bhinatti gokulayate`vishle`ghajanmaa jvarah.

'It is like molten gold. What did out heart become? It became liquid gold that simmered. It became a deadly poison. The pain was greater than being hit by a thunderbolt. It was like a triangular arrowhead that pierced the heart. This was my condition when I became separated from Shri Krishna.'

So, first there was the pain of pain. Then, the condition of the gopis deteriorated so much that it seemed they were close to dying. Shri Krishna's लीला शक्ति *leela shakti* (the power of His leela) came and saved them. Earlier, they had forgotten Shri Krishna because they became immersed in thinking about their own beauty and sweetness. Now, when they felt the anguish of viraha, they forgot themselves, and became engrossed in thoughts of Shri Krishna's beauty and sweetness.

Viraha gives both heat and light. In the Shastra of rasa, viraha is compared to the sun. Just as the sun gives us light, but also gives an unbearable heat, the memory of the qualities of the Beloved are awakened in the premi. This is the light in which the premi sees the Beloved's good qualities, and realizes, 'I did not do right.' However, there is an acute suffering, because the pain of separation burns the heart of the premi. The love flows in a steady stream.

दोषेण क्षयितां गुणेन गुणता कामप्यनातन्वती
प्रेम स्वारसिकस्य तस्य चिदियं विक्रीडती क्रिया।

Doshe`na kshayitaam gune`na gunataa kaamapyanaatanvatee pre`ma svaarasikasya tasya chidiyam vikreedatee kriyaa. Prema is a rasa of our own heart. It is natural; it is not artificial. Hired prema is not prema. There is no imitation in prema. Prema is that, which does not reduce even when the Beloved's faults are clearly seen. Nor does it increase when good qualities are seen. That means, prema is unaffected by the virtues and faults of the Beloved.

Prema does not reduce even when the Beloved is far away; nor does it increase when He is close. Prema is unaffected by proximity or distance. It is unaffected by the place. It makes no difference to the prema whether the Beloved comes after many days, or stays with the premi. Prema is a rasa that is the essence of the Paramatma incarnate – रसो वैसः। रसं ह्येवायं लबध्वा आनन्दी भवति *raso vai sah. Rasam hye`vaayam labdhvaa aanandee bhavati.* Once this rasa is obtained, there is only anand. The gopis did not remain gopis; they became Krishna. And, they began to enact Krishna's leelas. This total immersion is described in the second chapter...

कस्याश्चित् पूतनायत्याः कृष्णायन्त्यपिबत्।

Kasyaachit pootanaayantyaah krishnaayantyapibat.

One gopi climbed on another's shoulders. 'You are the Kaliya nag, and I am Krishna. I am dancing.' Another gopi picked up a sari and said, 'I have lifted up the Goverdhan. I am Krishna.' One gopi said, 'I am Krishna. I am drinking the milk of Putana.' Yet another gopi said, 'See how gracefully I walk!' One gopi began to break the demon Shatkasura with her foot.

The gopis forgot their own beauty. They became engrossed in Shri Krishna's beauty. Viraha caused pain, and the pain made the gopi forget themselves. When they forgot themselves, they became engrossed in Shri Krishna. They began to look for Him. They searched all round, trying to investigate His movements. Today, you people will say it is an exaggeration, but when I used to walk on the road – I walked for hundreds, even thousands of miles = my hands and legs would get almost too weary to function. I would ask whoever I met, how far the closest village was.

प्रेमाङ्गा प्रकृतिविचला चेतना चेतनेश्वर।

Pre`maangaa prakritivichalaa che`tanaa che`tane`shvara.

When people have become desperate with prema, they do not realize who they are asking. The gopis asked the banyan trees, 'You are tall, and can see all round. Where is Krishna?' They asked the other large trees. What would these trees say? They were full of arrogance. The gopis went to the trees on the bank of the Yamuna, but they were तीर्थावसी *teerthavaasi* (people who live in pilgrim places). They expected these trees to be compassionate, and tell them where Shri Krishna had gone. However, the people who live in the teerthas merely enjoy the benefit of other people's wealth. They are born in the teerthas in order to get money out of the pilgrims and tourists who come there. The trees on the banks of the Yamuna have no compassion, and no affection.

The gopis went to the jasmine shrubs. 'You are blooming! He has touched you as He went by.'

'Tulsi! You are very dear to Him.'
This is research. It is a search for the Beloved. It is जिज्ञासा *jigyaasaa* (a desire to know) the Brahman who is रस-स्वरूप *rasa-svaroopa* (the essence of rasa). रसो वै सः। रसं ह्येवायं लब्ध्वा आनन्दी भवति *Raso vai sah. Rasam hye`vaayam labdhvaa aanandee bhavati.* The gopis saw some footprints on the path. They followed the footprints and met Shri Radharani. Her vanity had been destroyed. The gopis wandered in the forest along with Shri Radharani. Prema arose there. The prema that was free of vanity – आराधना *aaraadhanaa*. तमःप्रविष्टमालक्ष्य ततो निववृतुः स्त्रियः *Tamahpravishtamaalakshya tato nivavrituh striyah.*
When the gopis went deeper into the forest, they saw that the darkness was becoming dense, One sakhi said, 'Oh, sakhi, you are looking for our Beloved. If He does not want to meet us, He will go deeper into the forest to avoid us. He will go into the shadow of the trees. Suppose a thorn pricks His foot? Suppose His tender feet are cut by a sharp stub of grass? Suppose His pitambar gets entangled in some wild creeper? He may even get hurt by a sharp branch or stump! He will face discomfort. No! No! It is not proper to look for Him any further. He will meet us when He pleases. Our strength and effort are useless. It is His Grace, His being pleased, His generosity, His nobility, and the love He has for us that will prevail. So, there is no need to search in the dark forest.'
Another gopis said, 'Then what should we do?'
You see – यत्र यन्नष्टं तत्रैव तल्लभते *yatra yannashtam tatraiva tallabhate`*. A thing that is lost is found in the place where it was lost. It can't be found if you look for it in another place. An example is given in Shridhar Swami's commentary on the Bhagwat. An old woman was looking for something under the light of the roadside at night. A kindhearted gentleman was passing by. "Mother, what are you looking for?' he asked.
'I am looking for a needle.'
'Mother, where was it lost?'
'It was lost in the house.'
'The why are you looking for it on the roadside?'
'There is no light in the house. There is light on the roadside, so I came here to look.'
गृहे नष्टं वने मृग्यते *Grihe` nashtam vane` mrigyate`*. It is useless to search in the forest for something that has been misplaced in the house. Bhagwan abides in our heart. If we can't get His darshan there – if you don't try to look for Him in your own heart, and go to the East, West, North and South in search

of Him, how will you find Him? Seek Him within. A poet of long ago has written –

मैं ही हूँ व्रज मोमें बसत है वृन्दावन

Mein hee hun vraja momein basata hai vrindaavana.

'I am Vraja. Vrindavan is in my heart. The sport of Radha-Krishna is also in my heart. What is the point of going outside to look for it?'

I will tell you about this merely as an indication. The उपासना *upaasanaa* (worship) of the Brahman is described in the fourth part of the Kena Upanishad. There, the van (forest) has been described for the भौतिक *bhautik* (material) worship. तद्ध तद् वनं नाम *Tassha tad vanam naama.* There is a van where the trees are the Brahman, the creepers are the Brahman, and the leaves, flowers and fruits are all the Brahman. The earth itself is the Brahman – तद्ध वनं नाम *tad vanam naama.*

Come, let us give up जड़ता *jadataa* (being inanimate, inert and insensate), and look for the Paramatma in that van.

The Shukla Yajurveda says, किं तद् वनं। क उ वृक्ष आस *'Kim tad vanam. Ka u vriksha aasa.'* Which van is that? What is that tree? The words have been changed in the Krishna Yajurveda. ब्रह्म तद् वनं। ब्रह्म उ वृक्ष आस '*Brahm tad vanam. Brahm u vriksha aasa.'* The Brahman is the van, and the Brahman is the trees. The Vrindavan you are meditating upon – the Vrindavan that comes into your heart – is the देह *dhe`ya* Vrindavan, the Vrindavan of meditation. It is not a gross Vrindavan. It is a Vrindavan to meditate upon. After the description of the आधिभौतिक दृष्टि *aadhibhautik drishti* (the material viewpoint), comes the आधिदैविक दृष्टि *aadhidaivik drishti* (the divine viewpoint).

विद्युतो व्यद्युत *Vidyuto vyadyuta.*

Lightening crackles. Just as flashes of lightening appear suddenly among thick dark clouds, Shri Krishna is like a blue rain cloud, and His pitambar flashes intermittently. Sometimes, His teeth shine, and the luster of His nails is glimpsed. Thus, the gopis get flashes of Shri Krishna that are like flashes of lightening in the dark clouds. Then, the आध्यात्मिक *aadhyaatmik* (metaphysical) उपासना *upaasanaa* (worship) is described.

लालयतीव। ध्यायतीव *Laalayateeva. Dhyaayateeva.*

Our mind does ध्यान *dhyaana* (meditation), and then it wanders. It becomes restless at times, and it becomes steady at times. We should not feel apprehensive. This is a search for Shri Krishna.

तद् विजिज्ञासस्व *Tad vijigyaasasva.*

Come to this Brahman. Come; let us immerse our minds in this light that flashes as brightly as lightening. We should repeatedly bring our focus back to Him, and not falter if the mind is fickle.

All the gopis gathered on the bank of Jamunaji. You all know that the साधुता *sadhootaa* (goodness) of Jamunaji is somewhat different from that of Gangaji and the others. Here, the dark grains of sand are forms of Shri Krishna, and the golden grains of sand are forms of Shri Radha. It is as though countless pairs of dark and fair frolic together. If the trees are Krishna, the creepers that cling to them are Radha.

In Vraja, the females of the animals, birds and clay are also Radha-Krishna. The flowers are the smiles of the creepers. The sap of the trees is the fruit. Don't see this Vrindavan in a gross form. See the Vrindavan in your heart. Yamunaji is lost in meditating on Shri Krishna. She is blue, and flows with a stately gentleness. Meditating on Shri Krishna has made her blue.

Our people of Vrindavan – who delight in Shri Krishna's leelas – give a description of an incident. Shri Radha-Krishna once went to Yamunaji to play in the river. They decided to play a game of hide and seek in the water. When Shri Radha went underwater, Shri Krishna would try to find her, and catch her. Then He would go underwater and she would look for Him. They would swim towards a lotus flower, to see who could reach it first.

Now, when Shri Krishna swam underwater, His blue-hued form would be concealed in Yamunaji's blue waters. When Shri Radharani went underwater, her fair form would gleam in the water, and Shri Krishna would immediately catch her. 'This Yamunaji is partial to You,' said Shri Radharani. 'We won't play this game in the Yamunaji. Let us go and play in some lake.'

The feeling in Vraja is exceptional. I will narrate an example. One day, the cows were walking, with Shri Krishna behind them. The sunlight was extremely hot. You will call this an exaggeration. There was a spot where Shri Krishna stopped. He turned His back to the sun, and bent forward. He would go no further. The gwaal baal went on ahead with the cows.

Lalita sakhi saw this from afar. 'Oh! Shri Krishna is standing in this hot sun! The earth is heated by the intense heat of the sunlight.' She came closer, and was amazed at what she saw. She saw Shri Radharani's footprints on the ground, shaded by Shri Krishna's body. Shri Krishna said, 'The heat of the sun should not touch Shri Radharani's footprints.' This is why He stood there, shading them with His body. What a tender feeling! The sentiments of the Vrajvasis are very tender.

The gopis began to think of how Shri Krishna could be induced to come. One gopi said, ‘Shri Krishna is very fond of music. He goes and stands quietly wherever music is played.’

नाहं वसामि बैकुण्ठे योगनां हृदये न च।
मद्भक्ताः यत्र गायन्ति तत्र तिष्ठामि नारद।।

Naaham vasaami vaikunthe` yoginaam hridaye` na cha,
Madbhaktaah yatra gaayanti tatra tishthaami naarada.

‘I do not live in Vaikunth. Nor do I stay in the hearts of Yogis. I stay where My bhaktas talk lovingly about Me. I stand there and listen to the sweet voices of My bhaktas.’

‘This is a good method,’ said one gopi. ‘Come; let us sing. He will surely come to hear our songs.’ This is called ‘Gopi Geet’ – the song of the gopis. It is the third chapter of the Raas Panchadhyayi.

जयति तेऽधिकं जन्मना व्रजः श्रयत इन्दिरा शश्वदत्र हि।
दयित दृश्ययां दिक्षु तावकास्त्वयि धृतासवस्त्वां विचिन्वते।
शरदुदाशये साधुजातसत्सरसिजोदरश्रीमुषा दृषा।
सुरतनाथ तेऽशुल्कदासिका वरद निघ्नतो नेह किं वधः।।

Jayati te`dhikam janmanaa vraja shrayata indiraa shashvadatra hi,
Dayita drishyataam dikshu taavakaastvayi dhritaasavatvaam vichinvate`.
Sharadudaashaye` saadhujaatasatsarasijodarashreemushaa drishaa,
Suratanaatha te`shulkadaasikaa varada nighnato ne`ha kim vadhah.

The gopis sing mellifluously. Musicians sing this song to the accompaniment of a veena or sitar, and tables. There is great pathos in it.

The gopis said, ‘Vraja is a naturally superior place. However, ever since You have come, it has become the most superior place in the world. Laxmi – who is worshipped by the whole world – has come here, and is serving the creepers and trees of Vraja. The Mistress of Vaikunth is a servant in Vraja. She purifies every tree, creeper and grain of earth as she walks, because the feet of her Beloved will walk there.

However, Krishna, You are very hard-hearted. Look; just take one look! It seems that You have shut Your eyes; You have gone far away. Open Your eyes and see the gopis who love You. Your loved ones are wandering about at night looking for You. How can You bear this?

Just see the condition of Your gopis! Where have You hidden Yourself? Let us play a game, that we catch a glimpse of You, and You catch a glimpse of us, and then we see You again. Your beauty and Your attractive form have captivated us. If we were to die because of being separated from You, this thought is unbearable. Had we died by Kaliya nag’s poison, at least Your reputation would not have been tarnished! If we die now, because of You,

You will be held responsible for our death. And, we know that You are not merely the son of a gopi.

न खलु गोपिकानन्दनो भवानखिलदेहिनामन्तरात्मदृक्।
विखनसार्थितो विश्वगुप्तये सख उदेयिवान् सात्वां कुले।।

Na khalu gopikaanandano bhavaanakhilade`hinaamanataraatmadrik,
Vikhanasaarthito vishvaguptaye` sahka ude`yivaan saatvataam kule`.

You are not just a gopi's son; You are the *antaryaami* (knower of everyone's thoughts) Narayana, who abides in all hearts.

An अर्द्ध कुम्भ *Ardha Kumbha* was held at Prayag in 1936. I was giving discourses on the Bhagwat there. The organizers had made a high platform for me. At that time, I had not become a Sanyasi – I was still a married householder. People would go and invite Mahatmas to come and listen to the discourse. Shri Jayendrapuri Maharaj came, Shrautamuniji came, Bhagwatanandji came, and Shri Udiyababaji Maharaj came, among others. They would come and sit in the sand. I did not know them. I was giving the meaning of this shloka:

न खलु गोपिकानन्दनो भवान् *Na khalu gopikaanandano bhavaan*. 'Shri Krishna, न खलु गोपिका नन्दनो भवान् *na khalu gopikaa nandano bhavaan* – You are not the son of a gopi. Had You been a gopi's son, You would not have behaved in such a hard-hearted way with us. न खलु गोपिका नन्दनो भवान् *Na khalu gopikaa nandano bhavaan*.'

Shri Krishna said, 'That is true, gopis, I am the अन्तर्यामी *antaryaami* (the one who knows everybody's thoughts), I am the द्रष्टा *drashtaa* (the observer). I am the साक्षी *saakshee* (the inner witness).'

न खलु देहिनामन्तरात्मदृक् '*Na khalu de`hinaamantaraatmadrik* – You are not even an antaryaami; otherwise, You would have seen the pain in our heart! How could You bear to see our suffering?'

'No, I am the drashtaa; the sakshi.'

'Oh! Can a drashtaa or sakshi be so pitiless?'

'O gopis! Brahmaji prayed to Me to come and protect the world. That is why I have come. I am Narayana.'

The gopis said, न खलु, विखनसार्थितो विश्वगुप्तये '*Na khalu, vikhanasaarthito vishvaguptaye`*. Brahmaji did not pray to You at all! Had You come to protect the world, wouldn't you have protected us, as well?'

'O gopis, then who am I?'

सख उदेयिवान् सात्वतां कुले '*Sakha ude`yivaan saatvataam kule`*. You are like someone who has dropped out of the sky. You have come like a cloud-flower that falls from the sky. You have no pity. No affection and no heart! Where are You hiding, to harass us?' This is how the gopis talk.

A voice came from one side. 'Krishna! Pace Your hand on our head. शिरसि धेहि न; श्रीकरग्रहम् *Shirasi dhe`hi naa shreekaraagraham.* Please place Your sweet hand – that is full of rasa, like a lotus flower, on our head.'
'Excellent!' said Shri Krishna. 'I accept Your prayer. All of you stand in a row. I will walk behind you, placing My hand on your heads one by one. Your prayer will be answered.'
'No,' said the gopis. 'Let us have a darshan of Your lovely face that is like a lotus flower.'
'All right. You all stand in line, and I will pass by in front.'
The gopis said, 'No, not this.

प्रणतदेहिनां पापकर्शनं तृणचरानुगं श्रीनिकेतनम्।
फणिफणार्पितं पदाम्बुजं कृणु कुचेषु नः कृन्धि हृच्छयम्।।

Pranatade`hiaam paapakarshanam trinacharaanugam shreenike`tanam,
Fanifanaarpitam te` padaambujam krina kuche`shu nah krindhi hrichhayam.

And, placing You hand is not enough!'
To place a hand on someone's head means to say, 'You are mine.'
'To give the darshan of Your मुखराविन्द *mukhaaravinda* (face that is like a lotus) is a common thing.'
'Then?'
'We want these lotus feet of Yours.'
'Oh, why do you want My lotus feet, gopis?'
'Your lotus feet are दोषहारी *doshahaari* – they have the power to remove all our faults. By placing Your feet on our heart, any fault or sin we may have will be removed. Come; place Your lotus-feet on our heat. Your lotus-feet are प्रणतदेहिनां पापकर्शनं *pranatade`hinaam paapakarshanam* – the sins of every person who bows down to You are wiped away. The obstacles that prevent us from meeting You, are removed.'
'Oh, your heart is very hard, gopis! Your breast is so hard, and My feet are so tender! I will get hurt if I place My feet over your heart.'
The gopis said, तृणचरानुगं '*Trinacharaanugam*. Your feet don't get hurt when You run after the calves and cows in the forest; and they'll get hurt if You place them on our breast?'
Shri Krishna said, 'Oh, you think My feet are so hard, gopis?'
The gopis were imagining this conversation. It was the gopis who said these things amongst themselves. The gopis said, श्रीनिकेतनं '*Shreenike`tanam* – Laxmi herself stays at Your feet. You walk, placing Your feet on the breast of Bhudevi (the goddess Earth, Narayana's second wife), and Shridevi (Laxmi) comes and insists that You place Your feet in her breast.'

'No, gopis, there is some fault in your hearts, and so I cannot place My feet over your heart.'

The gopis said,फणिफणार्पितं पदाम्बुजं कृणु कुचेषु नः कृन्धि हृच्छयम् '*Fanifanaarpitam te` padaambujam krinu kuche`shu nah krindhi hrichhayam.'* You kept Your feet on the hoods of Kaliya nag. His body was filled with venom. The water of Yamunaji had become poisoned. यद् यद् शिरो न नमते *Yad yad shire` namate`* - You stamped on each hood that he raised arrogantly. You are the one who dances on the head of Kaliya nag, a serpent filled with deadly poison, and You fear to place Your feet on our heart? कृणु कुचेषु नः *Krinu kuche`shu nah.'*

'No, gopis. There is a desire in your hearts. I never place My foot on the heart of anyone who has desire, anger, or greed.'

'All right,' said the gopis. 'We accept that we have desire in our heart. However, when You place Your feet on it, all the desire will be destroyed. The way to banish the serpent of desire that sleeps in our heart, is to place Your foot over our heart.'

'All right, gopis. I am prepared to do this, too. All of you lie down side by side. I will walk placing My feet on your breast.'

'No,' said the gopis. 'That is not enough.

मधुरया गिरा वल्गुवाक्यया बुधमनोज्ञया पुष्करेक्षण।
विधिकरीरिमा वीर मुह्यतीरधरसीधुनाऽऽप्याययस्व नः।।

Madhurayaa giraa valguvaakyayaa budhamanogyayaa pushkare`kshana,
Vidhikareerimaa veera muhyateeradharaseedhunaapyayayasvanah.

First, You captivated us with words as sweet as honey; the words of the Vedas that expound on the greatness of bhakti and Your rasa. You enticed us with Your eloquence and poetic talk. You entranced our heart with Your eyes that are filled with love. Our prana is leaving us now. We need अमृत *amrita* (the elixir that gives immortality).'

'O gopis, shall I bring the amrit from Swarg (Indra's Heaven?'

'No! No! We don't want that amrit. We don't want the amrit that is stored. We don't want the धरा *dharaa* (of the earth) amrit, or the amrit that is kept in a bottle. We want that amrit, which is not kept in another place. We have no desire to get the amrit that was brought up at the churning of the inanimate ocean. We want प्रेमामृत *pre`maamrita* – the nectar of prema.'

'All right. Will one or two drops suffice?'

'No! आप्याययज्ञव नः *Aapyayaayasva nah* – saturate every pore of our body with that amrit.'

'O gopis, you have so much prema for Me in your heart! How is it that you stayed alive without Me?'

This whole conversation is taking place in the minds of the gopis. This is called आपेक्षिकी संगति *'aape`kshikee sangati'* in Sanskrit.
The gopis said one thing, and then thought, 'If Krishna says this in reply, this is what I will say.' She has this whole discussion in her own mind. That means, Krishna told them telepathically that there is no विरह *viraha* in prema.

कैतवरहितं प्रेम न भवति मानुषे लोके।
यदि भवति कस्य विरहो विरहे सत्यपि को जीवति।।

Kaitavarahitam pre`ma na bhavati maanushe`loke`,
Yadi bhavati kasya virahee virahe` satyapi ko jeevati.

'Look, gopis, निष्कपट प्रेम *nishkapat pre`ma* (love that has no extraneous considerations) is not possible in this world. No matter how much you love another, there is always something that is not revealed to them. We cannot have as much faith in another, as we have on our own self.'
'What if someone gets such a faith?'
'Then there is no viraha for that person.'
'What if viraha comes to that person?'
'Then they cannot remain alive. And, you are singing such lovely songs in My viraha!'
'Krishna, that is not my fault.'
'Then whose fault is it?'
तव कथाऽमृतं पाययद्भि सुकृतिभिः वञ्चितम्। *'Tava kathaamritam paayayadribhi sukitibhih vanchitam.*
Your agents are spread everywhere. They are commissioned agents. They have beguiled us by singing Your praises. They have spoken about Your leela, Your magnanimity, and Your nobility. We have been cheated by their descriptions of how sweet Your love is.

तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनं कविभिरीडितं कल्मषापहम्।
श्रवणमङ्गलं श्रीमदाततं भुवि गृणन्ति ते भूरिदा जनाः।।

Tava kathaamritam taptajeevanam kavibhireedhitam kalmashaapaham,
Shravanamangalam shreemadaatatam bhuvi grinanti te` bhooridaa janaah.'

One gopi said, 'Their कथा *kathaa* (discourses about Shri Krishna), and everything connected to You, is amrit.'
One gopis said, 'No! No! Whatever You say is amrit!'
'All right. You say that talk about Me is amrit.'
'No! We are not calling it the amrit that is kept in Swarg. The amrit of Your katha is even more special.
तप्तजीवनं *Taptajeevanam* – the amrit of Swarg is available only to the Devtas, and to wealthy, high born, and powerful people. The poor cannot drink it. However, this कथामृत *kathaamrita* of Yours gives the gift of life to the poor

and the troubled who burn with worldly sorrows. They burn because of their sins. They burn with desires of all kinds, with vanity and ignorance. The amrit of Swarg is not like Your kathamrit. The Mahatmas criticize that amrit, and praise this one.

कविभिरीडितम् *Kavibhireeditam* – one thing more. If someone goes to Swarg and drinks amrit, it is like a person who deposits advance payment in a hotel. Then he eats, drinks and lives there, as long as he has a credit balance. He is asked to leave, when his deposit is exhausted. If he is unable to pay his bills, they even confiscate his car. This amrit of Your katha, however, is wonderful!

कल्मषापहम् *Kalmashaapaham* – our पुण्य *punya* (the fruit of good deeds) is not diminished when we drink this amrit.' When we listen to the katha of Bhagwan, our पाप *paapa* (sins) are destroyed, not our punya.

श्रवणमङ्गलम् *Shravanamangalam* – we have to work hard to drink that amrit, but this amrit brings good fortune as soon as we hear it.

श्रीमदाततम् *Shreemadaatatam* – that amrit is intoxicating, but this one is peace-giving. That is small in quantity; this is much more. The people who give the amrit of Your katha are great donors.'

One gopi said, 'Oh, no! What you say is not correct.'

'Then what is the correct meaning?'

'It is तव कथांमृतं '*tava kathaamritam'*. That means, to hear Your katha is to die. Your katha means death. Whoever hears it, dies as far as the world is concerned. This is a lethal katha.

तप्तजीवनं *Taptajeevanam* – it is like someone throwing a few drops of water on a red hot iron saucepan. It only increases the heat.

कविभिरीडितं *Kavibhireeditam* – when the jesters praise someone, it is not sincere praise; it is flattery. The poets sing Your praises in the same way. It is not genuine praise.

कल्मषापहम् *Kalmashaapaham* – the wealthy people have paid those who do Your katha. They have given it great publicity. This kathamrit of Yours has been our undoing.'

'This is actually another form of eulogizing the kathamrit. It is because of this that we have distanced ourselves from our home, family, relatives, Dharma, and karma. We have given up everything, and come to meet You. You are now flogging the dead. Please manifest quickly!'

Om Shantih Shantih Shantih.

Chapter IV

We laugh and lament so many times in this world! That means, we feel happy at times, and sad at times. There is no person who does not feel दुःख *dukha* (sorrow) and सुख *sukha* (happiness) at some time, within twenty-four hours.

शोकस्थानसहस्त्राणि भयस्थानशतानि च।
दिवसे दिवसे मूढं आविशान्ति न पण्डितम्।।
Shokasthaanasahasraani bhayasthaanashtaani cha,
Divase` divase` moodham aavishanti na punditam.

This is the Gayatri of the Mahabharata. The Mahabharata has four Gayatris, and this is one of them. शोक *Shoka* (unhappiness) comes a thousand times in a day; so does भय *bhaya* (fear). This is because we forget our स्वरूप *svaroopa* (essence); we forget Bhagwan. There is no question of either sorrow or fear if we keep our focus on our swarup, because our essence is always happy and limpid. It is unchanging, and it has great depth. Even if our focus is kept on the Bhagwan in our heart, there is no question of feeling sad or afraid. When we focus on the past or future, we forget Bhagwan. One Seth (wealthy businessman) asked a Sant (Saint), 'Maharaj, do you ever think about me?' The Sant replied, 'Seth, I do think about you, but only when I forget Bhagwan.'

The word दुनिया *'duniyaa'* (the interactive world) comes from Sanskrit. The word दून '*doon*' indicates a state of unhappiness. There is a popular saying, 'The King is unhappy, and the people are unhappy, and this makes the Sadhu doubly unhappy.' The only way to be free of sorrow is to not allow ourselves to be effected by this world. All our joys and sorrows should be connected to Bhagwan. If you want to fight, you should fight only with Him; if you want to laugh, laugh with Him.

So, the sorrows of the world will be dispelled. What is needed for this is a feeling of love for Bhagwan. In this world, when we love someone, and he comes to know that we love him, he causes us much sorrow. He will begin to harass us as soon as he finds out that we are emotionally dependent on him. This is the way of the world. We have to divert our love from this world, and direct it towards Bhagwan.

The first thing is that the heart must be tender. Look; if I hold a handkerchief in my hand, I will have to harden my fist, and make sure it does not fall down and taken away by someone. People who love worldly objects have to

keep their hearts hardened. They have to make sure that they are not deceived and cheated, and that they don't become unpopular.

When we love someone, we are always worried about them. We cling to them. Our heart becomes hard. Our love for worldly objects should become lax. The greater our attachment to the world, the harder our hearts will be. And the more detached we are, our heart will be that much softer. So, our attachment to the world should be lax, and our heart should be so malleable, that it gets stamped permanently with मेरे तो गिरिधर गोपाल दूसरो न कोई '*Me`re` to giridhara gopaala doosaro na koyee.'* (Meera sang, 'Only Girdhar Gopal is mine. I have nobody else.) ममत्वातिशयाङ्किता *Mamatvaati shayaankita.*

When this feeling is strengthened – भाव स एव सान्द्रात्मा बुद्धैः प्रेम निगद्यते *bhaava sa e`va saandraatmaa budhaih pre`ma nigadadyate`* - it is called 'prema'. Now, if we get the feeling if संयोग *sanyoga* (being with Bhagwan), we will feel happy. And, if we get the feeling of वियोग *viyoga* (being separated from Him) we will feel unhappy. You should know, however, that the sorrow experienced for Bhagwan results in happiness.

I do not remember the year, when I saw a cinema called 'Bharat Milap', or 'Ram Rajya'. In the cinema, it is shown that Shri Ramachandra is deeply unhappy when He is separated from Sitaji. When He is alone, He clutches at His heart in despair. His stomach has shrunk. Tears flow from His eyes. I sat in my seat, weeping throughout this scene. However, when I came out of the cinema hall, there was no thought of sorrow in my mind. I only thought of how good the cinema was, and how much I enjoyed it.

Once, when I went to Mysore, I saw the museum of the Maharaja of Mysore. When I saw the paintings that depicted मधुर रस *madhur rasa* (romance), I felt romantic. When I saw the paintings of हास्य रस *haasya rasa* (humor), I began to laugh. When I saw the pictures depicting करुणा रस *karunaa rasa* (pathos), I felt compassion. When I came out of the museum, I felt that it had been a very enjoyable experience.

Hence, when we begin to experience सुख-दुःख *sukha-dukha* in our heart, and do not allow it to be connected to any external factor, then the वृत्ति *vritti* (mental inclinations) of both sukha and dukha become vrittis that give happiness. This is due to prema for Bhagwan.

When there is anguish in the heart for obtaining Shri Krishna, even the bitterness of poison pales in comparison. And, when the exquisite ecstasy of meeting Shri Krishna is experienced, even the sweetness of ambrosia pales beside it. Only a person who has attained prema for Shyamsundar Shri Krishna knows how varied are the footsteps of prema. Some are crooked, some are straight, some are sweet and some are bitter.

So, love for Bhagwan should be firmly established in the heart when a person interacts in the world. Then, he will not get attached to the world. Nor will his behavior be faulty, because improper behavior will result in his forgetting Bhagwan, and so will his getting attached to the world. So, we should keep Bhagwan in our heart, attach our mind to Him, and carry on with our worldly interactions.

Now, I am taking you there – it is the शरद् ऋतु *sharad ritu* (Autumn); it is a moonlit night. The Yamuna flows with a stately gentleness. The banks are sandy. A cool, fragrant breeze is blowing. The gopis' minds are completely immersed in Shri Krishna, after experiencing the anguish of separation. They imagine that they are talking to Him. It is amazing! Shri Krishna is not before the gopis, but they are conversing with Him. They feel that He is with them, listening to them, and replying. All the conversation takes place in the second person – you, you, you!

प्रहसितं प्रिय प्रेमवीक्षणं विहरणं च ते ध्यानमङ्गलम्।
रहसि संविदं या हृदिस्पृशः कुहक नो मनः क्षोभयन्ति हि।।

Prahasitam priya pre`maveekshanam viharam cha te` dhyaanamangalam,
Rahasi samvidam yaa hridisprishah kuhaka no manah kshobhayanti hi.

The Shastra of Performing Arts has defined the different kinds of smiles, laughs and laughter. 'When You laugh loudly, it seems that You have attracted my attention that had wandered away from You. When I raise my eyes to look at You, my eyes meet Your love-filled eyes. I see deep love on Your countenance. Then, when You embrace one of Your companions, or place Your hand on his shoulder, or stand in a posture of dance – विहरणं च ते *viharanam cha te`* - I remember these scenes, and meditate upon them. Then I feel that everything is auspicious. If You meet me alone somewhere, and say something – रहसि संविदो या हृदिस्पृशः *rahasi samvido yaa hridisprishah* – Your speech touches my heart, tickles it, and gets imbedded in it.

कठोरा भव मृद्वीका प्राणास्त्वमसि राधिके।
अस्ति नान्य चकोरस्य चन्द्ररेखां विना गति।।

Kathoraa bhava mridveekaa praanaastvamasi raadhike`,
Asti naanyaa chakorasya chandrare`khaam vinaa gati.

Whether You choose to be hard-hearted, or soft-hearted, You are my prana. Just as the चकोर *chakora* (a mythological bird that is hopelessly in love with the moon) has no choice but to love the moon, my life also depends on You. When You stand alone with me, Your sweet words pierce my heart. But, You are deceitful! I am only a simple rustic woman. कुहक नो मनः क्षोभयन्ति हि *Kuhaka no manah kshobhayanti hi* – these memories come and agitate me.'

This love of the gopis is wonderful! People feel supremely at peace when they go to Bhagwan, and here, the gopis feel distress when they come close to Shri Krishna. Prema is not शान्ति *shaanti* (peace). The state of peace in Gnan is called Samadhi. This is a विक्षिप्त *vikshipta* (disturbed) state of Gnan. Vikshipta means, how they dance, and how they move their hands. The eyes move, the eyebrows move, the waist moves, and the feet move.

The Yogis discarded vikshep, considering it to be dukha, but the bhaktas converted it into sukha and welcomed it. It is the greatness of bhakti that it turns vikshep into Paramanand. Where the शयन *shayana* (sleeping) become Paramanand, the नर्तन *nartan* (dancing) also becomes Paramanand. The vikshep also becomes Paramanand. The reason is that everything is done for the sake of our Beloved, for our Prabhu (Master). The karma should be pure, and the motive should also be pure. The कर्ता *kartaa* (the doer) – the अधिकारी *adhikaaree* (eligible person) – must also be pure. However, if the object of prema – the Beloved – is the essence of Paramanand, then the prema is also Paramanand, and so is the प्रेमी *pre`mi* (the one who loves). This is the greatness of prema.

Only the premi has the authority to call the Beloved कुहक; कपटी '*kuhaka; kapatee'* (deceitful). A person cannot utter such words unless he has prema. This is not something that can be imitated. The word प्रीतम '*preetam'* (loved one) comes from the Sanskrit word प्रियतम '*priyatam'*. I have seen people call their loved ones कपटी '*kapati*', or बेवकूफ '*be`vakoofa'* (idiot). The loved one feels very happy to get such an adjective, because he considers it a sign of love.

So, when anyone calls Bhagwan a kapati, He is filled with love, and He starts dancing. Why does He dance? He says, 'Oh! This person has taken My real name! Other people take My false names, because I remain hidden in spite of their great love. My premi has taken My real name today, and pleased Me.' This thought makes Him happy.

Look at what the gopis say:

चलसि यद् व्रजाच्चारयन् पशून् नलिनसुन्दरं नाथ ते पदम्।
शिलतृणाङ्कुरैः सीदतीति नः कलिलतां मनः कान्त गच्छति।

Chalasi yad vrajaanchaarayan pashoon nalina sundaram naatha te` padam,
Shilatrinaakuraih seedateeti nah kalilataam manah kaanta gachhati.

'When You go out of Vraja, we lament that You don't follow us, gopis. You don't go ahead of us. You go with these animals, taking them to graze in the forest. Sakhi, they are animals who have no नेम *ne`ma* (religious rules), or prema in their heart. Who knows where they will lead You to? We are always careful that the soles of Your feet are softer than lotus petals –

नलिनंसुन्दरं *nalinasundaram*. They are even more beautiful than lotuses. We are always alert that no thorn pricks them, that they are not scratched by any sharp tuft of grass, or by a sharp-edged stone lying on the path. We are always afraid that You may have pain or discomfort.

A debate starts in our mind. कले कलहस्य लता प्रतानं '*Kale` kalahasya lataa prataanam'*. The mind says, "If He follows the cows into the forest, how can His feet not be pricked by thorns? The cows don't inspect the path they tread, to see whether it is smooth or not."

Oh, but Krishna would be watchful.

"Yet, suppose a thorn pricks Him? It will cause so much discomfort!"

You go off to graze the cattle, but this debate rages in our mind all day.'

Another gopi shook her. 'Oh, what are you thinking of, you fool?'

'I am thinking about our Beloved.'

'What is our Beloved?'

'He is the कांत *kaanta* (husband, or the desired one). कस्य सुखस्य अन्तः निष्ठा *Kasya sukhasya antah nishthaa* – there is no greater source of happiness in our life. I am thinking that He should never have the discomfort of a hot breeze.'

'Oh, no! No! Kant is not the summit of sukha. He is kant – a बक *baka* (duck, a gossip). He shows prema superficially, but there is no prema in Him. Else, why would He have left us and gone away?'

Another gopi said, 'Oh, sakhi, you spoke very moderately. This kant of ours is an अन्तक *antak* (cause of the end) – He is death! He goes away to kill us, so that we die without Him. So, He is a bak, He is antak, He is kuhaka.' The gopis say whatever they feel like.

'Beloved, an inner battle starts in our heart as soon as You leave. Truly, when You go to the forest, we begin to abuse Brahma – the लोक पितामह ब्रह्मा *loka pitaamaha brahmaa* (the Grandsire of the human race) – जड उदीक्षतां पक्ष्मकृद् दृशाम् *jada udeekshataam pakshmakrid drishaam*. He made eyelids over our eyes, that blink, and disrupt our vision when we look at You. They don't allow us to see You continuously. This Brahma, who made our eyelids, is an insensate fool. He has no understanding of the intense suffering he inflicts on us gopis, by making eyelids over our eyes. What do we want? One point is that every fiber in our body wants that You should have no pain or discomfort.'

This is the essence of prema. A relationship that wants to give pleasure to the Beloved is called prema. There is an episode in the 'Shri Chaitanya Charitamrit', where this point is discussed. What is the difference between prema and kama? There is a hair-line's difference between prema and kama.

That, which pulls sukha towards us, is kama; and that which pushes sukha towards the Beloved, is prema. So:

यत्ते सुजातचरणाम्बुरुहं स्तनेषु भीताः शनैः प्रिय दधीमहि कर्कशेषु।
तेनाटवीमटसि तद् व्यथते न किंस्वित् कूर्पादिभिर्भ्रमति धीर्भवदायुषां नः।।

Yatte` sujaatacharanaamburuhum stane`shu bheetaaha shanaihi priya dadheemahi karkashe`shu,
Te`naataveematasi tad vyathate` na kinsvit koorpaadibhirbhramati dheerbhavadaayushaam nah.

'Our life span depends on You. You alone are our life span, our life, our prema and our Atma. We have nobody except You. We are nothing without You. So, when we place Your feet – that are as tender as lotus petals – on our breast, we do so with trepidation. We place them gently, incase the hardness of our breast hurts the tender soles of Your feet.

तेनाटवीमटसि *Te`naataveematasi* – You are wandering in the forest on those same tender feet. We feel anxious. Suppose a thorn pricks Your feet? Suppose they are cut by a sharp blade of kusha grass, or grazed by a sharp stone? We are half-dead, inert, and You are making Yourself uncomfortable so that we become even more unhappy? Your intellect is not steady. It is wavering. You are unable to decide whether we should live or die.'

This is called the महाभाव *'mahaa bhaava'* (an overwhelming emotion) in the states of prema. In the different stages of prema, this condition is known as the maha bhava. That, which never breaks, is called prema.

आसृष्टेरक्षयिष्णुं हृदयविधुमणिद्रावणं वक्रमाणं पूर्णत्वेप्युद्वहन्तं निजरुचिघटया साध्वसं ध्वंसयन्तम्।
तन्वानं शं प्रदोषे धृतनवनवतासं पदं मादनत्वात् अद्वैतं नोमि राधादनुजविजयिनोरद्भुतं भावचन्द्रम्।।

Aasrishte`rakshayishnum hridayavidhumanidraavanam vakramaanam poornatve`pyudvahantam nijaruchighatayaa saadhvasam dhvansayantam,
Tanvaanam sham pradoshe` dritanavanavataasam padam maadanatvaat advaitam naumi raadhaadanujavijayinoradbhutam bhaavachandram.

'Aasrishte` rakshayishnu'*. This is a feeling, a relationship that has no thought of ever being broken. That is called prema. It is called प्रणय '*pranaya*', and also स्नेह '*sne`ha'. The moonstone of the heart melts, in this state.

वक्रमाणं पूर्णत्वेप्युद्वहन्तं

Vakramaanam poornatve`pyudvahantam.

That which moves in a somewhat crooked manner, is called मान '*maana*' (an artificial aloofness). Prema, sneha, pranay, maan, and निर्भयता *nirbhayataa* (fearlessness) – in prema, there is no fear. When some fault is seen in the Beloved, prema spreads all over him. Prema does not leave the Beloved when his faults are seen. It does not lessen when faults appear. On the

contrary, the lover feels, 'This is when I am needed. My prema will now be revealed as service.' The premi is filled with rasa.

Mother Yashoda is feeding her child, the little Shri Krishna, and she feels apprehensive that the milk may be too hot or too cold. She wonders whether she put in too much sugar, or too little. Fear is present in the heart, even during the effort to give sukha.

After the maha bhava comes the अधिरूढ़ महाभाव *aadhiroodha bhaava*. This is a preamble to prema. It is of two kinds – मोदन *modan* (joy) in संयोग *sanyoga* (union with Shri Krishna), and मादन *maadan* (intoxication) in वियोग *viyoga* (separation from Shri Krishna). Just as the introduction of जीवनमुक्ति *jeevanmukti* (liberation from rebirth) is described, our Shastras also describe prema in different ways. They are not erroneous. They are not false; they are not mere poems. All the descriptions given by the Alwars of South India, the bhaktas of Vraja – including Haridasji, Harivanshji and Harivyasji – and the love of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, contain wonderful episodes of prema.

So, this is the state of maha bhava, when apprehension is present even while rendering service.

'O gopi, do you know how hard your breast is? If you place Shri Krishna's tender feet on it, He will suffer discomfort. Why should you do anything that causes Him discomfort?'

'I know that He feels happy even in our giving Him this discomfort.'

So, every fiber of a premi longs to give pleasure and comfort to the Beloved. There is a description:

इति गोप्यः प्रगायन्त्यः प्रलपन्त्यश्च चित्रधा।
रुरुदुः सुस्वरं राजन् कृष्णदर्शनलालसाः।।

Iti gopyah pragaayantyah pralapantashcha chitradhaa,
Ruruduh susvaran raajan krishnadarshanalaalasaah.

Prema is गोपनीय *gopaneeya* – it should be kept hidden. It is not meant to be announced in the market place or advertised in the newspapers. The more it is kept concealed, the stronger it grows. This is the nature of prema.

प्रेमाद्वयो रसिकयोरपि दीप एव हृद्वेश्म भासयति निश्चल एव भाति।
द्वाराद्वयं वदनस्तु बहिष्कृतेन निर्वाति शीघ्रमथवा लघुतामुपैति।।

Pre`maadvayo rasikayorapi deepa e`va hridve`shma bhaasayati nishchala e`va bhaati,
Dvaaraadvayam vadanastu bahishkrite`na nirvaati sheeghramathavaa laghutaamupaiti.

This is a दीपक *deepak* (lamp) that newly-wed ladies hide under the corner of their sari, before going out of the house. You all would be using torches, so

you would have forgotten how vulnerable the flame of a lamp is, to the slightest breeze.

What is prema? It is a lamp that burns brightly in the temple of the heart. The flame is steady, but when it is brought out of the mouth – when it is no longer protected under the sari – it flickers, and may even be blown out. This is why every lady who is a प्रेमिका *pre`mikaa* (lover) is called a 'gopika.'

The parents are unaware, the parents-in-law are unaware, and the husband and his younger brother are also unaware. This inner प्रेमामृत *pre`maamrita* (the elixir of prema), the sweet rasa of pure love, is savored by the gopis. No gopi is named in the Bhagwat. People forcibly extract some names; I also know how to do that. However, not a single name – not Radha, nor Lalita, nor Vishakha, nor Chaitrarekha, nor Rangdevi – is mentioned in the Shrimad Bhagwat. The names of the sakhas (friends) of Shri Krishna are given. Mothers Yashoda and Rohini are mentioned. So are the fathers, Nanda and Upananda, but no gopi is named. The reason is that they are gopikas – they hide their love for Shri Krishna. Prema is something that is meant to be kept hidden.

प्रेमाद्वयो रसिकयोरपि दीप एव हृद्वेश्म भासयति निश्चल एव भाति।
द्वाराद्वयं वदनस्तु बहिष्कृतेन निर्वाति शीघ्रमथवा लघुतामुपैति।।

Pre`maadvayo rasikayorapi dosha e`va hriddve`shma bhaasayati nishchala e`va bhaati,
Dvaaraadvayam vadanastu bahishkrite`na nirvaati sheeghramathavaa laghutaamupaiti.

'O, the ways of love are different. The cup is neither filled, nor emptied. In love, there is never a feeling of complete satisfaction, nor of complete emptiness. There is always a wish for more. There is no 'enough'. This is the way of love.

इति गोप्यः प्रागायन्त्यः

Iti gopyah pragaayantah.

The gopis, whose nature is to hide their prema, are so desperate, that they begin to sing openly.

प्रगायन्त्यः

Pragaayantyah.

They began to talk wildly. They became like paintings. What is a gopi? Do their darshan – see them with reverence. The auspicious darshan of gopis.

कृष्णदर्शनलालसाः

Krishnadarshanalaalasaah.

They are personifications of लालसा *laalasaa* (coveting). Laalsa is something that has no form. Nobody has seen what laalsa looks like; whether it is red or

yellow, or white; whether it is long or broad; fat or thin. It is a feeling. But at that time, it appears as though the laalsa for the darshan of Shri Krishna has taken on the form of the gopis, who are singing about Shri Krishna. They have become desperate to obtain Him.

Truly, if only we could have that kind of desperate yearning for Shri Krishna! Here, when someone talks about getting a darshan of Bhagwan, people dismiss it as an illusion. I feel very sad about this. Is the darshan of Bhagwan an illusion?

The darshan of Mummy is real. No! Even the darshan of Mummy is an illusion. The darshan of your wife, or husband, is an illusion. The darshan of your father is an illusion. Do you know who your Mummy is? Who is your father? People will say, 'I know my father.' You don't really know. You were told by people and you believed it. You know neither you Mummy, nor your Daddy, nor your brother, nor your husband or wife. How did you get trapped in these illusions? You say that the darshan of Bhagwan is an illusion, and accept these relationships you believe in, as real? This leela of the gopis is a निवृत्तिपरक *nivrittiparak* (promoting withdrawal from the world). This is Sanyas. It is the Uttar Mimansa.

What is a gopi? She is the personification of yearning for the darshan of Shri Krishna.

रुरुदुः सुस्वरं राजन् कृष्णदश्रनलालसाः
तासामाविरभूच्छौरिः स्मयमानमुखामबुजः।
पीताम्बरधरः स्रग्वो साक्षान्मन्मथमन्मथः।।

Ruruduh susvaran raajan krishnadarshanalaalasaah.
Taasaamaavirbhootchshaurih smayamaanamukhaambujah,
Peetaambaradharah sragvee saakshaanmanmathamanmathah.

The Shastras say there is no better method for the removal of kama.

विक्रीडितं व्रजवधूभिरिदं च विष्णोः श्रद्धाविन्तोऽनुश्रृणुयादथ वर्णयेद् यः।
भक्तिं परां भगवतिं प्रतिलभ्य कामं हृद्रोगमाश्वपहिनोत्यचिरेण धीरः।।

Vikreeditam vrajavadhoobhiridam cha vishnoh
shraddhaanvitonushrunuyaadatha varnaye`d yah,
Bhaktim paraam bhagavatim pratilabhya kaamam
hridrogamaashvapahinotyachire`na dheerah.

काम *Kaama* (desire) and लोभ *lobha* (avarice) are wandering about aimlessly. If you can establish this episode of the raas leela in your heart, this disease (desire and lust) of your heart will be removed. You will not be troubled by it at all. This raas leela is the treatment for this disease. It is an infallible cure.

When the gopis' anxiety becomes unbearable, Shri Krishna appears before them. They get Shri Krishna's darshan. You say that Tulsidasji's description is an illusion. You say that the descriptions of the darshans of Surdasji and Meera are illusions. That is a great audacity! It is a great impertinence! We get Bhagwan's darshan with these very eyes. It is just like my seeing you, and our seeing each other, with our physical eyes.
Moreover, we can have as strong a relationship with Bhagwan as we have with our father, husband, son, or mother. We can see Bhagwan even more clearly than the world we see all around us. Bhagwan laughs with His bhaktas, talks to them, eats with them, and plays with them.
What is this आभास-आभास *aabhaasa-aabhaasa* (illusion-illusion) you talk about? I feel astonished when even learned people talk about illusions. This world is an illusion, and the wife is an illusion. She has not been born along with you; she was connected with you later on. The husband is an illusion. He was not born along with you; he got connected to you later on. How did he become real? The mother is an illusion. You are just told that she is your mother. It is the same with the father. Bhagwan is our हृदयेश्वर *hridaye`shwara* – the Ishwara of our heart. He is the greatest wealth of our heart. He is the प्रेष्ठ *pre`shtha* (Beloved) – how is He an illusion? It is our worldly relationships that are illusions.
तासामाविरभूच्छौरिः स्मयमानमुखाम्बुजः।
Taasaamaavirbhoochhaurih smayamaanamukhaambujah.
Shri Krishna revealed Himself. He was smiling. His face was like a lotus in full bloom. स्मयमान *Smayamaana* – the gopis had मान *maana* at first. That maan did not remain in the gopis; it went into Shri Krishna.
'O gopis! How you pretended! How you harassed Me! Tell Me, what is the state of your heart now? What is your mental condition? The truth of the matter has now been exposed, isn't it?'
Yes, it is a good thing that the truth of the matter was revealed to the world. It became clear how we should behave with Bhagwan. When does Bhagwan come?

तासामाविरभूच्छौरिः स्मयमानमुखाम्बुजः।
पीताम्बरधरः स्रग्वी साक्षान्मन्मथमन्मथः।।

Taasaamaavirabhoochhaurih smayamaanamukhaambujah,
Peetaambaradharah sragvee saakshaanmanmathamanmathah.

He did not come from some other place. He had not hidden Himself in the Jamunaji, or some crevice close by. He had not gone into a mountain, or the forest; nor had He climbed up a tree to hide. तासां मध्ये एव आविर्भूत *Taasaam*

madhye` e`va aavirbhootah. The gopis were all around Him, and He appeared in their midst, like a sudden flash.

What had happened? Shri Krishna had concealed Himself under the odhni of one of the gopis, and remained among them. आपहि अमृत आपु अमरित घट्ट आपहि पीवन हारी *Aapahi amrita aapa amrita ghata, aapa hi peevana haaree.* (He is the amrit, He is the vessel in which the amrit is kept, and He is also the one who drinks the amrit.) When the gopis were saying, 'He will not be found here,' He quickly played the flute from under the odhni.

'Oh! He is here, somewhere! Look for Him! Surround Him! Catch Him!' Shri Krishna did not let the gopis lose hope. आशाबन्धः *Aashaabandhah* – He kept their hopes alive, playing the flute when they began to get disheartened. They could not make out where the sound of the flute came from. They would start searching afresh.

'Well, gopis?' asked Shri Krishna smilingly, as He appeared in their midst.

Those who say that Shri Krishna leela is a Kama leela should know that it is called the 'Kama-vijay leela' (the leela that gives victory over Kama) in the Shastras. It is a victory over kama. It is not a kama leela.

You would have heard that Swami Rama Tirtha went to school when he was young. The word ऋषिकुल *'rishikul'* (where Rishis taught young boys in earlier times) turned into 'school', after it went abroad. Its head – the letter 'ri' was cut off. When people go abroad, they come back changed. There are some changes in their lifestyle, eating and drinking, or in something else. So, there are changes in words also. People give up their culture, decorum, grammar, etc when they go abroad.

So, this मन्मथमन्मथः-मनो अथ्नाति इति मन्मथः। मन्मथस्यापि मन्मथ्नाति इति मन्मथमन्मथः *manmathamanmathah - mano mathnaati iti manmathah. Manmathasyaapi manmathnaati iti manmathamanmathah.* The one who creates a churning in our mind, is called a मन्मथः '*manmath*' (Cupid, or Kamadev). And, the one who causes मन्थन *manthan* (churning) in the mind of मन्मथः *manmath* is called मन्मथमन्मथः '*manmathamanmathah*.'

Yes! So, Swami Rama Tirtha was studying at school. An Inspector visited his school. He drew a line on the blackboard, and told the boys, 'Can you make this line small without touching it? Is anyone here clever enough to do this?'

Swami Rama Tirtha stood up. He picked up a piece of chalk, and went to the blackboard, and drew a long line beside the line drawn by the Inspector. He did not touch the line drawn by the Inspector; but the bigger line he made the first line short in comparison.

Prema for the world has filled our heart. We don't even understand prema. We don't know what prema is. We think that kama is prema. The unknowing youngsters get deluded and confused. When the long line appeared, the first line became short. When the longer line of prema appears, and we see what prema actually is, then the shallow feelings become insignificant by comparison. मन्मथमन्मथः *Manmathamanmathah.*

तासामाविरभूच्छौरिः स्मयमानमुखाम्बुजः।
पीताम्बरधरः स्रग्वी साक्षान्मन्मथमन्मथः।।

Taasaamaavirabhootchhaurih smayamaanamukhaambujah,
Peetaambaradharah sragvee saakshaanmanmathamanmathah.

Shri Krishna is the manmath of manmath, and He appeared in the middle of the gopis, wearing His पीताम्बर *peetaambara* (golden yellow stole). Those who know Sanskrit will know that it is not necessary to say, पीताम्बरधरः '*peetaambaradharah'* (wearing, or holding the pitambar). Grammatically, it is enough to say पीताम्बरः '*peetaambarah'*. They why did Shukdevji say पीताम्बरधरः '*peetaambaradharah'*? The Pundits of Sanskrit are extremely careful in the usage of words.

This is an indication that Shri Krishna was holding His pitambar with both hands. This is how a person who owes money comes, to apologize for being unable to reply his debt. Holding the stole in both hands is a sign of humility. Similarly, Shri Krishna appeared before the gopis, holding His pitambar.

'Gopis, I have caused you a great deal of suffering. Forgive Me!' Shri Krishna was filled with gratitude, as He showed Himself. This is called पीताम्बरधरः *'peetaambaradharah'*. When He appeared before the gopis, पीताम्बर धरायां यस्य '*peetaambarah dharaayaam yasya.'* – His pitambar slipped, and fell to the ground. Or else, पीतायाः पीतवर्णाया स्वर्णवर्णायाः राधायाः अम्बरं धरति *peetaayaah peetavarnaayaa svarnavarnaayaah raadhaayaah ambaram dharati* – Shri Radharani's sari is on His body! Oh, how wonderful this is!

It is changed. पीताया-पुनः पुनः पीता धराऽमृताया *Peetaayaa – punah punah peetaa dharaamritaayaa* – He is wearing a garment of the color of the one who He has tasted again and again! साक्षान्मन्मथमन्मथः *Saakshaanmanmathamanmathah.* Bhagwan manifested!

Tomorrow we will discuss what happened after this.

Om Shantih Shantih Shantih.

Chapter V

आनन्दब्रह्मविद्यामधिजिगमिषवस्तैत्तिरीया गंभीरं,
मीमांसन्ते स्म विश्वं तदुदयविलयं निर्भयास्तत्स्वरूपम्।
कल्याणी काण्ववाणी विमृशति मधुरं वीणयन्ति च तत्त्वं,
तत्पूर्णानन्दतीर्थे मधुनि वयमयी निर्द्वयं लीलयामः।।

Aanandabrahmavidyaamadhijigamishavastaittireeyaa gambheeram,
Meemaansante` sma vishvam tadudayavilayam nirbhayaastatsvaroopam.
Kalyaani kaanavavaanee vimrishati madhuram veenayanti cha tattvam,
Tatpoornaanandateerthe` madhuni vayamayee nirdvayam leelayaamah.

In the opinion of Shridhar Swami, this Raas Panchadhyayi is a Sanyas leela. He has written this clearly.

व्सतुतः निवृत्तिपरेयं पञ्चाध्यायी

Vastutah nivrittipare`yam panchaadhyaayee.

The gopis have left behind all four main human achievements of Artha, Dharma, Kama and Moksha. It was like leaving behind the preliminary ritualistic worship like Karma Kand and Mantra Samhita, and rising to the level of the Upanishads. Shri Krishna is like the Upanishads, and the four Purusharthas are like the preliminary steps to spiritual progress. The gopis leave the world and set off to meet Shri Krishna.

This is Shridhar Swami's commentary. Shri Dhanpati Suriji says that just as the Shrutis (the Vedic verses, or richas) overtly take the names of different Devtas like Indra, Varuna, Mitra, and Agni, but actually –

एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा बदन्ति *E`kam sad vipraa bahudhaa vadanti.*

(There is only one reality, but the Brahmins describe it in different ways) they are different names of the one Paramatma. When we take a fleeting look, it seems as though the Shrutis are establishing different Devtas. However, when we go deeper into the matter, we see that all the Shrutis and richas indicate the one Paramatma.

एकं सद् विबभूव विम्बम्।
एको अग्निः बहुधा समिध्यते।

E`kam sad vibabhoova vimbam,
E`ko agnih bahudhaa samidhyate`.

So, what is the gopi? She is a Shruti, a richa, of the Vedas. Just as they describe the one Paramatma using different names, it seems at first glance that the gopis may be married to different gopas (cowherds), but they have prema only for Shri Krishna. This is the commentary given by Shri Dhanpati Suri, on these five chapters of the raas leela. He also says that this leela promotes निवृत्ति *nivritti* (withdrawing from worldly activities).

The commentary of the Yoga Paksha (the viewpoint of Yoga) says that just as there are three main channels of spiritual energy – the Ida, Pingla, and Sushumna – and ultimately all the channels merge into the Paramatma, the descriptions of the gopis is actually a description of these subtle channels.

The वृत्ति पक्ष *vritti paksha* (the viewpoint of the inclinations) has another opinion. People believe that there are many Vedic Devtas, and that they are indications of wonderful secret truths. The first point is that not a single मजहब *majhab* (religious school of thought) in the world accepts the Ishwara as the अभिन्न निमित्तोपादान कारण *abhinna nimittopaadaana kaarana* - the cause as well as the matter – of all Creation. It is only the Vedic tradition that says that the potter is also Bhagwan, and the clay is also Bhagwan. No other majhab in the world believes that the clay is Bhagwan. This is why they have to keep the Ishwara remote and apart.

The Ishwara is only निराकार *niraakaara* (without form). He is the कर्ता *kartaa* (doer), सर्वज्ञ *sarvagya* (all-knowing), सर्वशक्ति *sarva-shakti* (all-powerful). All that is very well. However, the Vedic tradition is the only school of thought that believes He is also everything. As a result, for us, everything in the world is the essence of the Parameshwara. We see Him everywhere as we walk, eat, drink, and talk. The other religions – like Islam, Christianity, the Jews, Parsis, Sikhs, Arya Samajis and others, believe that the Ishwara is without form only. He creates the world, but He is not the matter of which the world is made. If we were to share this belief, idol worship would not be possible for us. The special factor of the Vedic Sampradaya (sect) is that the Ishwara is also the matter of all Creation; He is not limited to a formless entity who sits apart.

Somebody asked Shri Udiyababaji Maharaj, 'Maharaj, the Ishwara is nirakara, isn't He?'

'Then, is your son साकार *saakaara* (with form)?' asked Baba. 'If the Ishwara was only nirakara, then what is sakara? Is it your child?' This was the way he talked. This was his lifestyle.

Those who don't understand this principle accuse the Vedic Dharma of worshipping many gods. They don't understand even the ABC of the Vedic Dharma. For us, the Parameshwara is present in all forms.

न हि विकृतिं त्यजन्ति कनकस्य तदात्मतया स्वकृतमनुप्रविष्टमिदमात्मतयाऽवसितम्।

Na hi vikritim tyajanti kanakasya tadaatmatayaa
svakritamanupravishtamidamaatmatayaavasitam.

Nobody gives up gold when it is made into a piece of jewelry. Nobody gives up clay because it has been made into a pot, or just kept as a lump yet to be used. Similarly, Bhagwan is the Atma of all. He may be in any form, like a

bel or banyan tree; He is worthy of worship in every form. He may be in the form of a Shaligram or Shivalinga (stones worshipped as symbols of Vishnu and Shiva). He may be a clay idol, or water, or fire, or the wind, or the sky.

भूरसि भूमिरसि। जलमासीत् आप्रचेतेदं आपोविष्ठा। अग्नये नय सुपथाराये। अग्निमीले पुरोहितं । वायो तमेव प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मासि। कं ब्रह्म। खं ब्रह्म। मनो ब्रह्म। विज्ञानं ब्रह्म। आनन्दो ब्रह्म।

Bhoorasi bhoomirasi. Jalamaaseet aaprache`te`dam aapovishthaa. Agnaye` naya supathaaraaye`. Agnimeede` purohitam. Vaayo tvame`va pratyaksham brahmaasi. Kam brahma. Kham brahma. Mano brahma. Vignaanam brahma. Anando brahma.

So, the inclinations we have cannot do raas with the Ishwara if He remains aloof, formless, remote, unseen, and unknown. We must know that the Paramatma is everything.

Sometimes, I feel reticent to do a katha on the Raas Panchadhyayi outside Vrindavan. Here, however, it is only for five days, concluding today. Otherwise, this is a subject that can be spoken on for years. At this point of time, at least sixty or seventy commentaries of the Raas Panchadhyayi are available. Therefore, I feel somewhat hesitant to speak among those who do little Satsang (attend discourses).

The Shrimad Bhagwat says that five things are caused by अज्ञान *agnaana* (lack of Gnan). They are all mentioned in one shloka.

जनिमसतः सतो मृतिमुतात्मनि ये च भिदां विपणमृतं स्मरन्त्युपदिशन्ति त आरुपितैः।
त्रिगुणमयः पुमानिति भिदा यदबोधकृता त्वयि न ततः परत्र स भवेदवबोधरसे।।

Janimasatah sato mritimutaatmani ye` cha bhidaam vipanamritam smarantyupadishanti ta aarupitaih,
Trigunamayah pumaaniti bhidaa yadabodhakritaa tvayi na tatah paratra sa bhave`davabodharase`.

One point is that those who think that Moksha is not the essence of the Atma; that it is created by doing साधना *saadhanaa* (effort for spiritual progress), are mistaken.

Those who think that बन्धन *bandhan* (worldly bonds) are real, and can be removed by some special effort, are also mistaken.

Those who think that there are separate Atmas because there are separate bodies, are also mistaken. The pots may be separate and different, but the clay is one. There are many ripples in the water, but water is one. There are many particles of dust in the air, but the earth is one. The flames are many, but fire is one. Gusts of wind may come from the East or the West, but the wind is one. There are no divisions in the sky. The directions have no lines to separate them. No essence becomes separate due to the differences of name and form.

The Atma is an essence. It is not a fragment of imagination. It is not a feeling, or a mental superimposition. The difference that is seen in objects does not create differences in the essence of the Atma. Those who believe it to be different are mistaken.

विपणमृतं स्मरन्ति *Vipanamritam smaranti* – the business of give and take in this world includes the fruits of past birth, future lives, Heaven and Hell. This is called the कर्मफल *karmafala* (the fruit of the karmas). This is a superimposition, for the purpose of giving Gnan about the Atma. The Shastras describe it by saying that the Atma is not a देह *de`ha* (body); it is separate from the body.

Those who say that the Atma is Tamo guni (contains lowly tendencies like sloth and delusion), Rajo guni)contains mixed tendencies like restlessness and desires), and Sattva guni (contains all the lofty tendencies), are also under a misapprehension. The Paramatma is the essence of the Atma. He is different from all the जीवात्मा *jeevaatmaa* (Atmas attached to bodies). But nothing is separate from Him.

भ्रमयति भारती त उरुवृत्तिभिरुक्थजडान्।

Bhramayati bhaarato ta uruvrittibhirukthajadaan.

Bhagwan's words are described differently, to give विवेक *vive`ka* (discrimination), बुद्धि *buddhi* (right thinking), and the ability for independent thought. This is for those who are attached to the world. So, rasa is awoken in our vritti when our inclinations are freed of agnan and worldly bonds. It is only when the mind is liberated from agnan that it experiences rasa in the pure world, the विज्ञान जगत *vignaana jagat* (the enlightened world) that is विज्ञान रूप *vignaana roopa* (the form of enlightenment). Then, Bhagwan becomes the object of every inclination. Nothing exists, except Bhagwan. 'Look, here is Shyam (Krishna)! Look! This, too, is Shyam!' The bhakta sees Bhagwan everywhere.

So, from the viewpoint of Vedanta, Yoga and Sankhya, - and also from the viewpoint of literature and the उपवेद *upave`da* (the less important Vedas) like the Gandharva Veda, everything is the Paramatma, and is for the Paramatma. The Gandharva Veda gives detailed descriptions of singing, music, dance, and drama. They are the tunes of the upavedas. If all four are connected to the Paramatma – we play for Him, sing for Him, dance for Him and act for Him – we hear His flute.

When you know the Paramatma as the upaveda – that is, as the basic matter of which the world is made – then raas will begin automatically in your mental tendencies.

The Gnan that is शांत *shaanta* (at peace) is called 'Samadhi', and everything is the form of Bhagwan. As soon as a person obtains this Gnan, Gnan begins to prance. The person has no further need of the peace of Samadhi in which all desires are stilled. There is no need for him to seek seclusion in a forest or on a mountain; no need to close his eyes, or do anything else.

Come, my brother, our Gnan dances when it sees everything as different forms of the Paramatma. This dancing, prancing Gnan is called 'Raas'. This is Gnan in the form of dance. This dance contains the exhilaration of bliss. It is the exhilaration that is present in the world of enlightenment. This exhilaration of bliss in an enlightened state is given the name of 'Raas'.

You saw how Shri Krishna propounded the Purva Mimansa, and how the gopis refuted it with the Uttar Mimansa. The gopis described the importance of Shri Krishna's form, and did raas with Him. Then, ego arose, and they could no longer see Bhagwan. He became परोक्ष *paroksha* (unseen). From the viewpoint of the देहाभिमान *de`haabhimaana* (when a person identifies with the body) Bhagwan is always paroksha. The gopis suffered the agony of separation. They tried to find Him, became engrossed in their search, found the path, and met Radharani. Then they sang the 'Gopi Geet.'

यत्ते सुजातचरणाम्बुरुह स्तनेषु भीताः शनैः प्रिय दधीमहि कर्कशेषु।
तेनाटवीमटसि तद् व्यथते न किंस्वित् कूर्पादिभिर्भ्रमति धीर्भवदायुषां नः।।

Yatte` sujaatacharanaaburuham stane`shu bheetaah shanaih priya dadheemahi karkashe`shu,
Te`naataveematasi tad vyathate`na kinsvit koorpaadibhirbhramati dheerbhavadaayushaam nah.

'When we do something with the intension of giving You sukha, the maha bhava that is dominant is the fear of causing discomfort to You inadvertently.'

Shri Krishna appeared. One gopi caught His hand lovingly. Another put His arm across her shoulder. There are many different descriptions. Someone caught hold of His feet, someone gave Him sidelong glances, someone sat aside and began to meditate, and some started to chant 'Krishna-Krishna!' Now, Krishna is in the middle, and the gopis – vrittis – are all around. The vrittis make Him the object of all their facets. This is the presentation of the first form of raas.

Shri Krishna has covered Himself with an odhni. This was a covering over the body. This आवरण *aavarana* (veil) is not the veil of विकार *vikaara* (mental distortions that hide the truth); it is the veil of संस्कार *sanskaara* (subtle subconscious superimpositions that are elevating). Vikara makes a person dance naked. Animals and birds are naked. Sanskaras are superimposed to

hide the nakedness. When this covering is removed by the use of *vive`ka* (discrimination) and prema, then Bhagwan sits on top of the veil.

The garments of the gopis were wet with their tears, and stained with the myrrh of their eyes. There were traces of the sandalwood paste that the gopis had smeared on their breast. These odhnis had been worn by the gopis. Now, the gopis spread them out on the ground, one on top of the other, making a seat for Shri Krishna. Shri Krishna sat on this seat made of the gopis' odhnis.

मनोरथान्तं श्रुतयो यथा ययुः।

Manorathaantam shrutayo yathaa yayuh.

The Shrutis found their मनोरथ *manoratha* (heart's desire). They obtained the fruit of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha – the रसब्रह्म *rasa-brahma* (the Brahman who is rasa). The gopis were immersed in bliss, just like the Saints are, when they obtain the Paramatma.

Now came the time for जिज्ञासा *jigyaasaa* (enquiry for the truth). As long as the prema has jigyasa for this world, and petty worldly matters, the intellect remains petty. The intellect grows in stature when it focuses on higher matters. The intellect has no length or breadth; no weight or age. It has no color such as red, black or blue. It simply takes on the form of the object on which it is focused.

How big is your intellect? It is as big as the subject of your thoughts. If you focus on your caste, your intellect is as big as your caste. If you focus on your majhab, your intellect is as big as your majhab. It is as big as your province, if that is your focus and as big as your country, if your country is your focus. If you think of any material object, your intellect is as big as that object. However, if you think about the अद्वैत *advaita* (non-dual) and पूर्ण *poorna* (whole, complete), your intellect will also be poorna. The fact is that the proportions of the intellect are the same as the subject upon which your mind dwells.

The gopis surrounded Shri Krishna. Some caught His feet, someone caught His hand. They gave Him a lot of love, asking, 'Now, where will You go? Now, You have to answer a question we have for You.'

A question-answer session started. What is the question? You can understand it in a very simple way; it is a straightforward question.

'There are some people who love the person who loves them. There are some people who love the other person even if he doesn't love them. There are some people who love neither the one who loves them, nor those who don't.' The gopis asked, 'Krishna! Answer our question. Which is the best in these three kinds of people?'

The question is quite clear. What is best – to love the person who loves you, to love the person who doesn't love you, or to be aloof and not love either of the two? The angle of aloofness is added by me; the gopi's viewpoint was different.
Shri Krishna said, 'To love someone who loves you is a worldly transaction.'
We make a note of the quantity of sweets sent by a relative when there is a wedding in his family. Then, when there is a wedding in our family, we send him an equal amount. Shri Krishna said, 'This is neither prema, nor is it Dharma. This is a kind of trading.'
'Very well. This is the worldly way of doing things. What about having prema for someone who has no prema for us? We should certainly have love for those who love us, but we should also have prema for those who don't love us.' Prema is like the light of the sun. It falls on the fair person and also on the dark person. It is the moonlight that falls on the चकोर *chakora* (a bird who is in love with the moon) as well as on the crow whose eyes are shut at night. It also falls equally on the owl, whose eyes are open at night, and on the bat that is blind. Prema is the moonlight that falls on all, whether they see it or not. It is our nature, our nobility. Our prema should be such that whoever comes to us is filled with it.
Who can have such prema? The examples that are given are the love parents have for their son. Even if the son does not love them, they love him and want what is best for him. This is also how a Saint loves all beings. A Saint will want the good of all, even if nobody loves him.
The Jain Dharma says that we should never be the cause of anyone's suffering. Whether it is a friend or a foe, अहिंसा *ahinsaa* (non-violence) is our Dharma. The Buddhists say that we should show compassion to all, whether they are good or bad. The Sanatan (Vedic) Dharma says that we should do whatever is beneficial for people, regardless of what they are like. You can do surgery, or give a massage. The Sanatan Dharma is हित प्रधान *hita-pradhaana* (doing good is the most important principle). The Buddhist Dharma is करुणा प्रधान *karunaa-pradhaana* (being compassionate is the most important principle), and the Jain Dharma is अहिंसा प्रधान *ahinsaa-pradhaana* (non-violence is the most important principle). There is a common factor in all three. In ahinsa, we do not inflict suffering; karuna softens the heart; and the good of all is the basic goal.
If you can be alert and practice compassion wisely, do so. However, if you have to harden your heart to benefit the other person, be hard hearted. If you can do good by practicing non-violence, do so; otherwise, accept a little

violence for a greater good. What we want is the good of all. This is the specialty of Dharma. So, it is in the nature of parents and Saints to be benevolent, whether the child or other person loves them or not.
Now comes the third question. 'There are some people who love neither the one who loves them, no those who don't.'
Shri Krishna said, 'That is true, gopis; there are such people. However, who are they?
आत्मारामा ह्याप्तकामा अकृतज्ञा गुरुद्रुहः।
Aatmaaraama hyaaptakaamaa akritagnyaa gurudruhah.
There are four kinds of people who don't love even those who love them.'
For example, there is a Sadhu, who is given food by someone, and he feels grateful. A Sadhu gets his daily food from different people. If he feels grateful to them all, he will be weighed down with gratitude; then, will he remain a Sadhu? A Sadhu knows that there is only One, who feeds everybody. He loves that One.
One day, a large group arrived suddenly. I asked Shri Udiyababaji Maharaj, 'So many people have arrived suddenly – how will they eat?'
'Each has brought his own प्रारब्ध *praarabdha* (fate, created by past actions),' replied Baba. 'We are not the ones who provide food.'
Once, I was traveling on foot, with Baba. Baba said, 'Today, we are all to sit in the forest. Everybody should take a bath in the well water, and sit under the trees. You will all have to go hungry today.' Do you know what happened? A bullock cart arrived in the afternoon, laden with sweets and rich food. Baba asked the men, 'From where have you brought all this food?'
'There was a wedding, Maharaj,' replied the men. 'The bridegroom's party did not come. We are taking all the extra food to distribute to school children, and felt that the Mahatmas should also have some.' We all ate well. The prarabdha of the whole group was in that food.
I have traveled extensively on foot. I went from Vrindavan to Haridwar, then to Uttarkashi and Gangotri. Wherever I went, I got rotis on my journey and also on my return journey. I traveled thousands of miles on foot, but there was not a single day when I went hungry. I did not have a single paisa with me when I set out; and, I traveled all over the country! It is just a vanity to think that 'I' am the one who gives.

आत्मारामा ह्याप्तकामा

'Aatmaaraama hyaaptakaamaa.

The people who are आत्माराम *aatmaraama* (enlightened), or established in Samadhi, do not love even the people who love them.

आप्तकामा *Aaptakaama*.

Those for whom nothing remains to be attained, are fulfilled in every way. They may interact in the world, but they also love nobody; neither those who love them, nor who don't.

Then, there are some who do not even realize that they are loved by someone. It is definitely a little difficult to recognize a premi. People falsely assume that someone loves them. The fact is that each person loves himself.

So, even the people who fail to understand that they are loved, don't love anyone.'

'Very well, is there someone who does understand?'

'Yes; such a person is a great offender. He loves nobody.

गुरुद्रुहः गुरुयथा स्यात् तथा द्रुह्यन्ति

Gurudruhah guru yathaa syaat tathaa druhyanti.

The people who are very wicked also love nobody.'

The gopis began to look at each other, wondering which of these Krishna could be. 'Is He समाधिस्थ *samaadhishtha* (established in a Samadhi)? Or, is He कृतकृत्य *kritakritya* (fulfilled in every way)?' they thought. 'He goes to our houses to steal butter – how can He be kritakritya? Oh! Maybe He doesn't understand who loves Him. No, that is not possible. He plays the flute, calling out our names to summon us.'

Then? The gopis came to the unanimous conclusion, 'He is a terribly wicked offender, who doesn't love even people who love Him so deeply.'

'No, gopis,' said Shri Krishna, 'I am telling you what is in my heart.'

नाहं तु सख्यो भजतोऽपि जन्तून् भजाम्यमीषामनुवृत्तिवृत्तये।
यथा धनो लब्धधने विनष्टे तच्चिन्तयान्यन्निभृतो न वेद।।

Naaham tu sakhyo bhajatopi jantoon
bhajaamyameeshaamanuvrittirvrittaye`,
Yathaa dhano labdhadhane` vinashte` tachchintayaanyannibrito na ve`da.

A sakhi (lady friend) is one whose name gets attached to the name of the Beloved. For example, गोपीजनवल्लभ *gopeejanavallabha* – the one who is loved by the gopis. Or, राधारमण *raadhaaramana* – the one who delights in Radha. The names of the gopis are always attached to Shri Krishna's name. सहैव ख्यायते इति *Sahaiva khyaayate` iti.* When the fame of both is connected to each other.

'Sakhis!' said Shri Krishna, 'My name is linked to yours in the Vedas. The 'Gopaltapani Upanishad' has a mantra:

कृष्णाय गोविन्दाय गोपीजन-वल्लभाय *'Krishnaaya govindaaya gopeejana-vallabhaaya',* so, you are the sakhis, and I am the sakha. हम तुम एक कुञ्ज के सखा *Hum tum e`ka kunj ke` sakhaa.'*

‘Then why did You hide? Why did You harass us so much?’
‘Sometimes, I do such things.’
‘Why do You do such things?’
‘There was a poor man, who had nothing. Then, he found something precious. He was delighted. He hid it very carefully. However, one day it got lost. Now, earlier, when he had no wealth, he had no worries about safeguarding his wealth. But when he found wealth, and it was lost, he became so anxious to regain it that he did not even bother about his wife, or son, or his own body. So – what had happened? The wealth he had found was an external factor, but when it was lost, it became an internal factor. I met you outside, but when I hid Myself, and disappeared from your sight, than I went into your heart. This was a trick to get inside your heart.’

भजाभ्यमीषामनुवृत्तिवृत्त।
यथाधनो लब्धधने विनष्टे तच्चिन्तयान्यन् निभृतो न वेद।

Bhajaabhyameeshaamanuvrittivritta.
Yathaadhano labdhadhane` vinashte` tachchintayaanyan nibhrito na ve`da.

‘Krishna! How can we accept this statement of Yours?’
‘You can understand it by realizing how well I understand your prema.
एवं मदर्थोज्झितलोकवेद स्वानां हि वो मय्यनुवृत्तयेऽबलाः।
मया परोक्षं भजतां तिरोहितं मासूयितु मार्हततप्रित्यं प्रियाः।।
E`vam madarthojibhaktalokave`da svaanaam hi vo mayyanuvrittaye`balaah, Mayaa paroksham bhajataam tirohitam maasooyitu maarhatataprityam priyaah.
You all left your world for My sake. You gave up all your worldly relationships, wealth, and social image. You gave up the Vedas, and this world. You also gave up the Dharma that bestows auspicious lands after death. You left your families and your bodies. You even forgot to dress up!’
‘Then why did You leave us?’
मय्यनुबृत्तये *Mayyanuvrittaye`.*
‘I disappeared so that I would be present in your every inclination, every resolve, and every thought. मया परोक्षं भजता *Mayaa paroksham bhajataa.* I continued to love you inwardly, and disappeared from the outer world. I am not at fault. Please don’t blame Me. I continued to have prema for you.
Listen, gopis! I tell you what is in My heart. I lay bare My heart before you.

न पारयेऽहं निरवद्यसंयुजां स्वसाधुकृत्यं विबुधायुषापि वः।
या माभजन् दुर्जरगेहश्रृङ्खलाः संवृश्च्च तद्वः प्रतियातुसाधुना।।

Na paaraye`ham niravadyasanyujaam svasaadhukrityam vibudhaayushaapi vah,

Yaa maabhajan durjarage`hashrinkhalaah samvrishchcha tadvah pratiyaatusaadhunaa.

You see, gopis, a few years – or even a hundred years – are nothing. Even if I accept in infinitely long life in serving you, it will not be enough to repay the debt I owe you. I am a debtor of your prema, your सेवा *se`vaa* (service). Your hand is on top, and My hand is below. When you gave Me balls of butter to eat, your hand was on top, and My hand was below, when I took the butter. When it came to meeting you, eating, and drinking, I became a thief. I became your boy friend, and I became whatever you made Me. Even so, I can never be free of My debt to you.

न पारयेऽहं निरवद्यसंयुजां

Na paaraye`ham niravadyasanyujaam – your prema is absolutely limpid. It has no trace of any selfish interest. Your prema is genuine. I can never repay this debt. Nor do I want to be free of the debt. So, I am your lifelong debtor, no matter how long I live.'

The hearts of the gopis blossomed. All the veils were shattered. The first raas commenced. There was one Krishna in the middle, and the gopis were in a circle round Him. One Krishna stood, in the center of a circle of gopis, playing His flute and dancing. Shri Krishna is a form of Gnan. He dances with such speed that each of the thousands of gopis thinks that He is looking at her and smiling. His dangling ear rings are swinging, His मुकुट *mukut* (crown) is at a rakish angle, His pitambar flutters, His eyebrows quirk quizzically. The expression on His face, His smile, and His footwork are all enchanting. Every gopi feels that she is the one He is facing, and smiling at. Every one of them feels that His anklets tinkle to the tune of her voice. This is the experience of each gopi. There is one Krishna, and hundreds – no, thousands – of gopis. वनिता शतकोटि विलाकुलता '*Vanitaa shatakoti vilaakulataa.*' We have many inclinations, all centered round the one Krishna.

After this, the second raas commenced. What was that like? The gopis had surrounded Shri Krishna, to ensure that He did not run away again. Now, every gopi felt, 'Shri Krishna's hand is resting on my shoulder.' One Krishna stood between two gopis. There were two gopis, one on either side of Shri Krishna. So, there are two gopis and one Krishna, two gopis and one Krishna, and so on. Shri Krishna's arms are on the shoulders of the gopis to His left and right. They all form a circle, and do the raas.

If there had been one Krishna with one gopi, it would have become a रासभास *raasaabhaasa* (an illusion of the raas), as to how can there be two Krishnas? Now, there were two gopis and one Krishna, and the second raas

commenced. They became so engrossed in the raas that nobody had any time to look at anyone else.

कृत्वा तावन्तमात्मानं यावतीर्गोपयोषितः।

Kritvaa taavantamaatmaanam yaavateergopayoshitah.

Krishna manifested in as many forms as the gopis there. Each gopi had the experience that she was dancing alone with Shri Krishna. This was the third raas.

The first raas, called the Haleesak Nritya – had one Krishna and many gopis. The Shastra of Performing Arts calls this the Haleesak Nritya. Then came the raas of two gopis and one Krishna. Last comes the raas of one gopi and one Krishna. Every gopi has a separate Shri Krishna to dance with.

पादन्यासैर्भुजविधुतिभिः सस्मितैर्भ्रुविलासैर्भज्यन्मध्यैश्चलकुचपटैः कुण्डलैर्गण्डलोलैः।
स्विद्यन्मुख्यः कबररशनाग्रन्थ्यः कृष्णवध्वो गायन्त्यस्तं तडित इव ता मेघचक्रे विरेजुः।।

Paadanyaasairbhujavidyutibhih sasmitai-
bhroovilaasairbhajyanmadhyaishchalakuchapataih kundalairgandalolaih,
Svidyanmukhyah kabararashanaagranthayah krishnavadhvo gaayantyasta
tadita iva taa me`ghachakre` vire`juh.

It was as though dark clouds have spread overhead, and lightening flashes between them. The forms of Shri Krishna are like the dark rain clouds; and what are the gopis like? They flash among the clouds, like lightening – पादन्यासैर्भुजविधुतिभिः *Paadanyasairbhujavidyutibhih* – the feet beat the ground rhythmically, musically. भुजविद्युतिभिः *Bhujavidyutibhih* means, to extend a hand. This is a language. Dance has its own language. Just as we make the tongue dance when we talk, the limbs are used to convey things in dance. The hand indicates a refusal, like 'don't come'; or, 'move away'; and there are other gestures that beckon and invite.

The eyes also have a language, and the eyebrows also have a language. So do the lips. The hands and feet convey things, too. Dancing is a skill for expressing our love and feelings. There is a book on Natya Shastra in Sanskrit, called 'Bhavaprakashanam'. It was printed from Baroda. It is not easily available, but can be found with some effort. It describes one hundred and twenty six ways of using the eyes to convey different emotions. The eyes can express sorrow, supplication, and love. The book gives names to these expressions. ललित नेत्र *Lalita ne`tra* (romantic eyes), छलित नेत्र *chhalita ne`tra* (teasing eyes), वलित नेत्र *balita ne`tra* (imposing eyes), आर्त्त नेत्र *aarta ne`tra*_(pleading eyes) – a hundred and twenty six such expressions are defined in this book, describing the language of the eyes.

सस्मितैर्भ्रूविलासैः *Sasmitairbhrooviaasaih* – moving the eyebrows smilingly. भज्यन्मध्यैः *Bhajyanmadhyaih* – swinging the hips; चलकुचवतैः *chalakuchavataih*

– the garment slipping off the chest; कुण्डलैर्गण्डलोलै: *kundalairgandablaih* – the ear rings touching the cheeks while dancing, etc. स्विद्यन्मुख्यः कबररशानाग्रन्थयः कृष्णवध्वो *Svidyanmukhyah kabararashanaagranthayah krishnavadhavo* – they are perspiring. They are too engrossed in the dance to bother about their body. The flowers strung in their hair fall off. कबररशनाग्रन्थयः अग्रन्थयः *Kavararashanaagranthayah – agranthayah* – all the knots (ties) have been broken. कृष्णवध्वः *Krishnavadhavah* – Shukadevji says that these gopis are not women who are married to other men – they are Shri Krishna's wives. वहन्ति वध्नन्ति *Vahanti badhnaanti* – they bear the weight of their husband, and bind Him with their arms.

It would not be proper for me to start describing the Kama Shastra, isn't it? That is something that belongs exclusively to Vrindavan. We describe it to the rasikas – to those who savor the leela of Shri Krishna. The worldly people carry it into the world; making it something worldly. This is a leela that raises us above the world. It is a leela that lifts us far above the mundane emotions, and makes us engrossed in a feeling for Bhagwan.

गायन्त्यस्तं तडित इव मेघचक्रे विरेजुः *Gaayantyastam tadita iva taa me`ghachakre` vire`juhi.*

There are dark rain clouds in the sky. One cloud, two clouds, three clouds, or four clouds. When there are many clouds, it is called a घटा-मेघाचक्र *ghataa-meghachakra*. And, what are the gopis in it? तडित इव *Tadita iva* – lightening.

Now see what is given in the Kena Upanishad.

यदेतद् विद्युतो विद्युत तदा - विद्युतो व्यद्युत् *Yade`tad vidyuto vidyuta tadaa – vidyuto vyadyut.*

There are flashes of lightening. In the dense darkness of Nature, there are not one, but several moons. Flashes of lightening appear in this dark blue cloud that has no form and no characteristic.

मेघचक्रे विरेजुः *Me`ghachakre` vire`juh* – this raas.

रसो वैसः। रसं ह्येवायं लब्ध्वा आनन्दी भवति *Raso vai sah. Rasam hye`vaayam labdhvaa aanandee bhavati.*

Both Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Vallabh Acharyaji have said that the purpose of this leela is to rescue the people who are sinking in the sea of this world. Forget this world – it does not exist. It is a mental restlessness. It is imagined. If the mind shifts from the illusion of this world, and gets attached to Bhagwan, you will forget this interactive world. If you get attached to Bhagwan, your mind will be engrossed in Him. Just see that mind – see how powerful it is, how much detachment it has, how it is the form of bliss. See how it has become immersed in the Paramatma, and has forgotten this interactive world.

The Chandrama (moon) is the Devta of the mind. He was stunned when he saw this raas. Every vritti became like a star. Nobody was conscious of how much time passed – an age, an eon, several ages of time passed – and the same age of the same eon came back in the cycle of time, and the raas went on. The calculation of time is pure imagination. So is the calculation of space.

Where was Creation first made? It was made where you first became conscious of it. When was it made? It was made when you became aware of it. विज्ञान *Vignaana* (enlightenment) is what shows us what exists. To say that vignan is क्षणिक *kshnika* (momentary) is an insult to the Darshan Shastra (the Shastra of Philosophy). It is an insult to our own experience, if we say that knowledge is fleeting. To say that knowledge is शून्य *shoonya* (zero, a vacuum) is also an insult to our own personal experience. It is true that Gnan dances; it comes and accepts things from us; it calls us by our name. But, it is a vignan in its pristine form. That is the raas. Time disappeared; the place disappeared. All gross matter disappeared. The bees are humming; the bangles and anklets are tinkling. It is an ocean of the amrit of bliss. Springs of joy shower everybody. Rivers flow, the ocean heaves, there is a light shower of the raindrops of bliss. None of this is inanimate, or gross matter. Nor is it taking place in any geographical location. It is not bound by time. There is no feeling of individuality in it. There is only one Consciousness, filled with a blissful exuberance that is the leela of Bhagwan being manifested. It is like the विवर्त *vivarta* (mutation) of the Brahman in Vedanta. It is like the exhilaration of bliss in the Kashmiris. In it, the earth is anand, the water is anand, the brightness is anand, and the lifespan is anand.

मधुवाता ऋतायते मधु क्षरन्ति सिन्धवः।
माध्वीर्नः सन्त्वोषधीः ।। १ ।।
मधुनक्तमुतोषसो मधुमत्पार्थिवं रजः।
मधुद्यौरस्तु नः पिता ।। २ ।।

Madhuvaataa ritaayate` madhu ksharanti sindhavah,
Maadhveernah santvooshadheeh. (1)
Madhunaktamutoshaso madhumatpaarthivam rajah,
Madhudyaurastu nah pitaa. (2)

Every grain of dust is madhu (as sweet as honey); the rivers are madhu. माध्वेति अनेन इति मधुः *Maadhve`ti ane`na iti madhuh* – that, which makes a person intoxicated with joy, is called 'madhu'. What is happening, is a shower of madhu. It is a shower of rasa. There is no संसार *sansaara* (interactive world) here, so there is no question of any possibility of lust. Those who have doubts should immerse themselves in this and see. Kama

cannot enter this world. This is a divine world where there is no kama, no bhoga (personal gratification), no karta, no भोक्ता *bhoktaa* (the one who experiences), no premi, no priyatam (Beloved), and no prema. This is the रसाद्वैत *rasaadvaita* (the rasa in which no duality exists). It is प्रेमाद्वैत *pre`maadvaita* (the prema in which no duality exists). It is a सिद्धाद्वैत *siddhaadvaita* (the state where no duality exists). This is how our rasikas have described this raas.

न आदि न अन्त विहार करैं दोऊ।
लाल प्रिया में भई न चिन्हारी।
सदा एकरस आदि अनादि अनूप।
कोटि कल्प बीतत नहिंजानत।
बिहरत जुगल स्वरूप।

Na aadi na anta vihaara karain dou,
Laala priyaamain bhayee na chinhaaree,
Sadaa e`karasa aadi anaadi anoopa,
Koti kalpa beetata nahinjaanata,
Viharata jugala svaroopa.

दूरे सृष्ट्यादि वार्ता *Doore` srishyaadi vaartaa*. Oh! Don't talk about सृष्टि *srishti* (Creation), स्थिति *sthiti* (Sustainanace), or प्रलय *parlay* (Dissolution), my brother. Where do Creation, Sustenance, and Dissolution have any place, in this Raas-Brahman? This is what the description of the raas is like. I have just given you a glimpse of it. If you truly get immersed in it, then all you will see, is Shyam! Shyam everywhere! Shyam all the time!

Om Shantih Shantih Shantih.

एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति • सत्साहित्यप्रकाशनट्रस्ट •